The Remains of the Day Study Guide

The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

The Remains of the Day Study Guide....1

Contents....2

Introduction....4

Author Biography....5

Plot Summary....6

Prologue, July 1956....9

Day 1, Evening....11

Day 2, Morning....13

Day 2, Afternoon....17

Day 3, Morning....19

Day 3, Evening....21

Day Four, Afternoon....25

Day 6, Evening....28

Characters....29

Themes....32

Style....34

Historical Context....36

Critical Overview....38

Criticism....40

Critical Essay #1....41

Critical Essay #2....44

Adaptations....62

Topics for Further Study....63

Compare and Contrast....64

What Do I Read Next?....65

Further Study 66

Bibliography 67

Copyright Information 68

BOOKRAGS

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's third novel, *The Remains of the Day,* earned the 1989 Booker Prize, England's highest literary honor. The book is, in effect, a character study of Stevens, an aging butler who has spent thirty years in service at Darlington Hall. As he considers his past, he is forced to come to terms with the gravity of the sacrifices he has made in the name of duty.

Ishiguro's first two novels were set in Japan, so *The Remains of the Day* represents a departure in the author's work. Still, it is consistent with his writing style in that the book is told from a firstperson point of view by a person who faces past self-deception and regret. Further, the tone is controlled, the language is carefully crafted, and the themes revolve around the position of the individual within a society. While some critics maintain that although Ishiguro's setting is not Japan, the book retains a strong sense of the author's Japanese heritage, Ishiguro is quick to disagree. He responds by saying that most of his life experience has taken place in England and that his fictional influences are Britain's writers. Ishiguro's choice of subject matter in this book□and the realism with which he depicts it□demonstrates the importance of England's past and culture to him.

Author Biography

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, on November 8, 1954, to Shizuo (an oceanographer) and Shizuko (a homemaker). When he was six, he and his family moved to England where his father was commissioned by the British government to work on a project. Although the family expected to stay only a few years, his father's work kept them there much longer until England had truly become their home. Although Ishiguro and his two sisters attended English schools and had fairly typical English childhood experiences, at home they spoke Japanese and integrated their Japanese roots into their lives. In fact, Ishiguro has said that his interest in writing started as a way to preserve his fading memories of Japan, a country he would not see again until 1989.

Ishiguro earned a bachelor of arts degree with honors in philosophy and literature in 1978, and then completed his master of arts in creative writing at the University of East Anglia in 1980. He worked as a social worker for a number of years (during and after college) until he was able to make a living as a writer. During his years as a social worker, he met Lorna Anne MacDougall, whom he married in 1986. They have a daughter named Naomi, who was born in 1992. Ishiguro's interests include music and the cinema.

Despite his youth, Ishiguro has already built an impressive literary career. Each of his first three novels won awards□the third, *The Remains of the Day* won the prestigious Booker Prize□and all five of his novels to date have earned critical acclaim. Ishiguro's novels deal with self-deception, regret, and personal reflection. His narratives are carefully wrought first-person accounts with a controlled tone that does not deter from the speaker's deep soulsearching. Ishiguro is credited, alongside such highprofile writers as Salman Rushdie, with breathing new life into contemporary British fiction. In 1995, Ishiguro was named to the Order of the British Empire for his contributions to literature.

Plot Summary

Prologue: July 1956

Readers are introduced to Stevens, an aging butler who has served Darlington Hall for about thirty years. The house has recently come under the ownership of an American man named Mr. Farraday, after belonging to Lord Darlington's family for two centuries. While Lord Darlington was a reserved English gentleman, Mr. Farraday is a carefree man who likes to banter. Because he will be away for a while, he suggests that Stevens take his car and go on a trip. Stevens agrees, reasoning that he will go see Miss Kenton (the Hall's ex-housekeeper), who has just written a letter to Stevens. Always focused on duty, Stevens hopes to recruit Miss Kenton back to Darlington Hall, where she is needed.

Day One

Stevens begins his trip, feeling uneasy as he leaves Darlington Hall behind him. As he drives, he considers what is to him a very important question: What is a great butler? He recalls lively conversations with past colleagues on the matter. Stevens is humble, however, and never claims to be truly great, only to perform his duties with dignity.

Stevens relates stories about his father, also a butler. These stories reflect the sort of dignity and dedication to duty that Stevens admires. He is proud of his father's accomplishments, yet the reader notices that everything Stevens says about his father is relevant to work.

Day Two

Stevens stays the night at a country inn and wakes early. He provides some background about Miss Kenton, who left Darlington Hall in 1936 to get married. Although she is Mrs. Benn now, her letter to Stevens has indicated that her marriage may be in trouble. Stevens recalls that she was a good housekeeper with a professional demeanor. Stevens also reveals that she came to the Hall at the same time that his father came to serve as under-butler. Stevens's father's employer had recently died, and the old man had nowhere to go, so Stevens brought him to Darlington Hall. Although committed to doing a good job, the elder Stevens was limited by his age.

Reflecting on the past, Stevens provides more detail about Lord Darlington. He was influential and involved in politics, and he entertained frequently. Just after World War I, he was sympathetic toward Germany due to the harsh demands of the Treaty of Versailles. He resolved to do something and organized an unofficial conference in 1923 where important representatives from around the world gathered to make plans for asserting their influence in their respective governments on Germany's behalf. During

the conference, Stevens's father became seriously ill and died, but Stevens insisted on continuing with his duties.

Day Three

Stevens is still thinking about what makes a great butler when he has car trouble. Pulling into the driveway of a large house, he speaks with the chauffeur, who fixes the car. The man seems surprised to hear that Stevens worked for *the* Lord Darlington. This is the reader's first sense that Lord Darlington ended his life with a shameful reputation. Stevens explains that he has seen this reaction from people before, and that he has chosen to distance himself from it, not because of shame, but because of his desire to avoid hearing his past employer disparaged.

The next morning, Stevens interacts with the locals and then sits in a cafe enjoying tea. He reflects further about Lord Darlington and the political events and influential Germans that figured prominently in his life. Although Lord Darlington told him to fire two Jewish members of the house staff (which outraged Miss Kenton), Stevens maintains that his employer was not anti-Semitic.

Stevens continues on his drive to see Miss Kenton. He recalls an incident in which she came to his room and found him reading a romance novel. He explains this by saying that he was only reading it to improve his command of the English language. He follows this story by relating that he and Miss Kenton used to meet over cocoa to discuss household matters. Although they got to know each other better during these meetings, the relationship never became truly personal.

Stevens's thoughts return to Lord Darlington, and he admits that his employer was not the man Stevens thought he was at the time. Lord Darlington became a Nazi sympathizer and was manipulated and used by people in positions of power. Stevens realizes that Lord Darlington was misguided and foolish, but maintains that his own dedication to his employer was not blameworthy or unwise.

Day Four

Stevens's car runs out of gas, and a kind doctor helps him. Once his car is refueled, Stevens reaches his destination, Cornwall. As he prepares to meet with Miss Kenton, he remembers when she told him she was leaving to get married. His memory also takes him back to the time when he found out that Lord Darlington had been used by Hitler to spread propaganda in England.

Day Six

Now in a seaside town, Stevens relates his meeting with Miss Kenton two days previous. They exchanged pleasantries and caught each other up on what they had been doing. Stevens asked Miss Kenton if her husband was treating her well, and she

said that he was. She added that she did not love him at first, but came to love him. Now, she said, they are happy and expecting a grandchild. She also confessed that, at times, she wonders what might have been if she and Stevens had shared a life. When her words have sunk in, Stevens is saddened and a little heartbroken at realizing how close he came to having a fuller life.

Stevens shares his regrets with a stranger. He tells the man that he gave so much to Lord Darlington that he has little left for himself or anyone else. While Lord Darlington was not a bad man, he reasons, Stevens regrets not having made his own mistakes. He asks, "Really□one has to ask oneself □what dignity is there in that?" The stranger advises Stevens that it is best simply to look ahead. Stevens resolves to return to Darlington Hall and be the best butler he can be for his new employer, which means learning to banter with him.

Prologue, July 1956

Prologue, July 1956 Summary

The Remains of the Day is the story of an aging butler named Mr. Stevens who recalls his life of professional service and personal disappointment while employed at Darlington Hall in England for thirty years. As the novel begins, Stevens is debating whether or not to take a road trip while the master of the house, Mr. Farraday, is gone abroad for a few weeks. Mr. Farraday has suggested that Stevens might benefit from a little time away, but Stevens declines, citing his duties at Darlington. The topic has come up because Stevens received a letter from Miss Kenton, a former housekeeper at Darlington. Stevens believes she may want to return to employment at the grand house.

Miss Kenton married and has been away from Darlington for twenty years, but a recent divorce has left Miss Kenton with no future plans. She has written to Mr. Stevens about her personal dilemma. Stevens does not want to read too much into Miss Kenton's letter, but Darlington Hall is grossly understaffed now that Mr. Farraday is the new owner. Miss Kenton would find the present staff of four quite a change from the staff of eighteen employed at Darlington when she worked here last.

Stevens realizes that it is his job to develop the staffing plan for the great house, but Mr. Farraday, an American, does not want to invest the money into permanent staff. He prefers instead to hire day help to supplement. In his typical fastidious attention to detail, Stevens plots out his route for the trip and plans for his expenses for lodging and meals. He hopes to buy some new clothes before leaving. Stevens pays particular attention to Mrs. Jan Symon's book, *The Wonder of England,* which explains the best and most scenic routes to take in order to fully explore and appreciate the English countryside.

Upon hearing of Stevens' destination to visit Miss Kenton, Mr. Farraday teases Stevens that he is a ladies man, a statement that could not be further from the truth. The comment makes Stevens uncomfortable just the same. Stevens does not know how to interact with the American sensibilities of Mr. Farraday, and the relationship between the two men is cordial but a bit strained.

Prologue, July 1956 Analysis

The author utilizes the narrative style of writing from Mr. Stevens' perspective so the plot will be revealed from Stevens' perspective. Stevens thinks in the same style as he probably speaks, in a formal, reserved tone and language. Stevens is very proper in his demeanor and speech and finds it difficult to communicate with his new American employer, Mr. Farraday, who has less formal mannerisms. Even in his own thoughts, Stevens does not lapse into slang or fragmented sentences.

Professionalism is critical to Stevens, and he berates himself for not managing the household in a better fashion, even though he cannot control the limitations of reduced funding. There is great loyalty in Stevens, too, who was utterly devoted to the late Mr. Darlington but will attend Mr. Farraday's needs just as conscientiously. The butler's profession carries a long-standing heritage of pride in England, and Stevens is constantly comparing himself to others who are noted for their superior service.

Day 1, Evening

Day 1, Evening Summary

Not having traveled much in his life, Stevens is surprised to see that he still recognizes the scenery as he drives far from Darlington Hall. Some outings related to professional duties have taken him away from the house, but Stevens has not ventured away much for any other reasons.

When Stevens reaches an unfamiliar point, he parks the car and hears the voice of an old man. The man summons Stevens into the woods to enjoy the view and urges Stevens to climb a little further up the hill. The voice says that there, Stevens will find a bench where he may sit and enjoy the most magnificent view in all of England. Stevens contests that he needs to be on his way but finally concedes when the old man tells Stevens that this may be his last chance to ever take in such a spectacular view.

As Stevens continues on his trip, he ponders the question of what qualities make a great butler. Stevens is careful to note the distinction between *what* makes a good butler and *who* makes a good butler. Over the years, the topic has been discussed at length with other peers, and Stevens always professes that great butlers possess the quality of dignity. Indeed, a good butler is probably born with dignity, as it is something that cannot be taught.

The concept of what good butlership entails has changed since Stevens' father's days in the profession. In the elder Stevens' day, being a butler demanded not much more than the perfunctory functions of service. Now, a butler must have a strong command of the language as well as a working knowledge on a number of subjects. In spite of the profession's differing functions, Stevens still feels that his own father is the best butler he has ever seen. Unwavering dignity and quiet reserve were the watchwords for the elder Stevens, under whom Mr. Stevens trained many years ago.

Many people associated with the profession simply say that either a man has the dignified qualities necessary or he does not. Despite all his many conversations on the characteristics of a great butler, Stevens does not believe in this defeatist position. He feels that each man in the calling needs to strive to achieve the qualities that others will respect and identify as dignified.

Day 1, Evening Analysis

The road trip affords Stevens some time alone in which to reminisce and ponder issues that are important to him. At this point in his life, Stevens is in the latter stages of his career and mentally compares himself to great butlers of the past. This comparison is done subtly in his mind because it would be vulgar to voice such comparisons. It would destroy the dignity by which he measures himself.

The old man in the forest provides multi-layered symbolism and foreshadowing. Stevens has an obsessive personality, and even though he has pulled off the road to see a beautiful scene, he cannot see the forest for all the trees. The old man beckons Stevens to come into the woods to see more clearly. As if sensing Stevens' hesitancy about all issues in life, the old man further urges Stevens to climb higher to see an even more spectacular view. It may be Stevens' last chance, the old man says. The trip to see Miss Kenton is filled with possibilities, both personal and professional, and this small scene masterfully foreshadows the events to come.

Stevens has missed out on the normal events in a man's life due to his dedication and obsession with service to his employer. Service is all Stevens knows. Since his father was a sterling example of a professional, he always had a sense of reserve, even between father and son. Stevens refers to his father in the third person, even when addressing him directly, upholding a distance between them.

Day 2, Morning

Day 2, Morning Summary

Having spent the night at a guesthouse in Salisbury, Stevens awakens early because of the unfamiliar surroundings. He dresses for the day well ahead of the landlady's scheduled breakfast time. Stevens takes this time to ruminate about Miss Kenton's letter yet again. Even though Miss Kenton is now actually a married woman named Mrs. Benn, Stevens refers to her as Miss Kenton because that is the context in which he knew her.

According to Miss Kenton's letter, her marriage is failing, and she intimates that she may need to return to Darlington Hall to return a sense of stability to her life. Although not sure of Miss Kenton's intentions, Stevens admits to himself that her return would be the perfect solution to the staging problem at Darlington.

Stevens recalls the time when Miss Kenton first came to Darlington Hall. At this time, his own father comes to serve as under-butler. The elder Mr. Stevens has an impeccable reputation as a butler, but his age and declining health are challenges for the position. Stevens feels obligated to offer his father a position because the senior Mr. Stevens' employer has recently died, leaving Stevens' father with nowhere to live and work.

Stevens' mind wanders to one of his earliest encounters with Miss Kenton. The young woman brings a vase of fresh flowers to Stevens' office in an attempt to brighten the dreary room. Stevens is gracious but does not encourage a repeat of the action. Stevens also takes the opportunity to chastise Miss Kenton for calling the elder Mr. Stevens by his first name, William. Stevens interprets this action as disrespectful. Miss Kenton challenges Stevens. In his capacity of under-butler, the elder Mr. Stevens is in a lower position than Miss Kenton, who is head housekeeper. Their relative positions allow Miss Kenton to speak to Mr. Stevens informally, using his first name.

Stevens believes that Miss Kenton has not given proper respect to his father or taken the circumstances into account. The elder Mr. Stevens is much more aware of the workings of Darlington Hall than Miss Kenton seems to be, although the two arrived at the same time. Miss Kenton takes this statement as a derogatory remark about her capability and professionalism. She takes every opportunity thereafter to notify Stevens of any indiscretion of the elder Mr. Stevens.

Ultimately, the elder Mr. Stevens is charged with responsibilities that challenge his advanced years. The climax of many small indiscretions is when the elder Mr. Stevens falls on outside steps while carrying a tray of food for afternoon guests at the Hall. This incident incurs great embarrassment for everyone involved, and Stevens must tell his father that the elder man's duties need to be reassigned due to his infirmities and failing health.

His dignity affronted, the elder Mr. Stevens accepts the diminished capacity. Stevens hands the elder Mr. Stevens a paper on which his new tasks are outlined. Days later, Miss Kenton and Stevens witness the elder Mr. Stevens repeatedly re-tracing the path on which he fell, his eyes never leaving the ground, as if looking for some precious jewel he may have dropped. Realizing that he dwells too much on reminiscing, Stevens rouses himself to explore some of the scenery of Salisbury and the surrounding countryside.

Stevens returns to the topic of his father and apologizes to the reader for portraying the old man in a negative light. Stevens then provides some context for the decision to diminish the elder Mr. Stevens' responsibilities. At the time, in March, 1923, Lord Darlington is preparing to host a conference of important figures from around the world on the topic of Germany's reparations in the aftermath of World War I. The household is in a controlled frenzy, preparing for eighteen dignitaries and their accompanying staffs. Stevens feels that his own abilities as a butler are being judged. He believes that his duty requires him to alter the elder Mr. Stevens' responsibilities at the risk of wounding pride, and he hopes that his ability to make this change shows that he exhibits the qualities of a great butler.

Stevens shares the significance of the March 23 conference by relating how Lord Darlington comes to be involved in the topic of Germany's reparations and restoration. Having visited a friend, Herr Karl-Heinz Bremann, in Berlin several times in 1920 and witnessed Bremann's physical and personal deterioration, Darlington's distress grows over England's treatment of its defeated foe, Germany. From that point on, Lord Darlington works tirelessly to develop a coalition of world leaders with similar viewpoints who might help remedy the aftereffects of the Treaty of Versailles, the peace agreement between the Allies and Germany.

Stevens is painfully aware of his role of providing impeccable service during this conference. Anything less than stellar accommodations may have a negative impact of staggering importance. Tensions between Stevens and Miss Kenton escalate during this time period as well, and Miss Kenton ultimately asks Stevens to communicate with her in written form only, due to the strained nature of their conversations.

The conference begins as scheduled, and Stevens attends the main session as head butler. He garners information regarding the positions of the countries represented. The overall goal is to freeze German reparation payments and withdraw French troops from the Ruhr region. The French delegate, M. Dupont, is not actively participating in the conversation. Stevens wants to hear more, but Miss Kenton calls him out of the room on an urgent matter.

Miss Kenton tells Stevens that the elder Mr. Stevens has collapsed and is resting in his bed awaiting the arrival of the doctor. Urged by Miss Kenton, Stevens returns to his duties at the conference. A short time later, the physician notifies Stevens that the elder Mr. Stevens is very ill and is to be watched for any changes in condition.

During the course of the next day, the discussions in the conference room grow increasingly heated, and Stevens is keenly aware of his own responsibility to provide whatever amenities may alleviate distress of any sort. Periodically, Stevens visits the elder Mr. Stevens to check on his condition, and on one visit the nurse wakes the old man because he had wanted to speak to Stevens.

The elder Mr. Stevens declares his love and pride for Stevens and hopes that he has been a good father. Stevens tells the old man that he must return to his duties but that the two men can talk again in the morning. Stevens again returns to the conference. Miss Kenton summons him a short time later and informs Stevens that the elder Mr. Stevens has taken a turn for the worse. Stevens once again visits his father and asks Miss Kenton to notify him when the doctor arrives.

In the meantime, Stevens returns to his duties. He pours after-dinner drinks and attempts to accommodate the French delegate, who has been complaining during the whole conference of some foot discomfort. As Stevens leaves the room to find some first aid products for the delegate, Miss Kenton advises Stevens that the elder Mr. Stevens has just died. Upon arriving at his father's room, Stevens learns from the doctor that the old man had a stroke and had probably not suffered any pain.

Stevens is momentarily stunned but realizes his responsibilities. He returns to the conference and shares with the French delegate that a doctor is available to tend to his foot discomfort. Stevens recalls that fateful occasion with a touch of melancholy, but also with pride in the manner in which he conducted himself under the most trying of circumstances, both personally and professionally.

Day 2, Morning Analysis

The author introduces the tool of flashbacks to tell the story of Miss Kenton's arrival at Darlington Hall. This provides some context for Stevens' relationship with the woman. Clearly, there was strain in the relationship between these two highly motivated and principled people. Their relationship dynamic is important to understand in order to fully comprehend the events that unfold later in the novel.

Stevens recognizes characteristics in Miss Kenton similar to his own character, and he is perplexed at her obstinacy and outspokenness, especially for a woman of such a relatively young age. Miss Kenton's vitality is symbolized by the vase of flowers she delivers to Stevens' office, which Stevens summarily dismisses as unimportant to the running of the household. This rejection of her attempt to connect with the distant Stevens is a reflection of Stevens' resistance to change. Miss Kenton's age and enthusiasm are subtle threats to his well being, both personally and professionally.

The historical highlights of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and its aftermath are important to understanding the 1923 conference at Darlington. After the end of World War I in 1918, the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to make reparations for the destruction caused during the war. Germany was also ordered to deconstruct its military forces. On

an economic front, Germany was ordered to relinquish its colonies and much of its commerce mechanism.

These ultimatums were devastating for Germany. Its economic capabilities were greatly diminished, making it difficult to pay reparations. Many people around the world felt that the terms of the treaty were too harsh. Lord Darlington represents this point of view, and he tries to convince other countries to assist Germany. Meanwhile, the economic despair in Germany added to the evolution of fascism in that country and the eventual rise of Hitler, which would lead to the next World War. Some people with pro-German sentiments after the Treaty of Versailles became pro-Nazi during Hitler's rise to power.

Stevens prides himself on his intellectual capacity and instinctively understands the significance of the 1923 conference held at Darlington Hall. In his own way, Stevens plays an important part in the furtherance of his employer's goals. Stevens hopes his efforts will reflect positively on his own capacity to be a great butler.

Sadly, Stevens' restrained fervor to become a great butler comes at a personal cost, as evidenced by Stevens' relationship with his own father. The circumstances surrounding the elder Mr. Stevens' death highlight this conflict. Duties will not allow Stevens to attend to his father, and yet, ironically, it is the elder Mr. Stevens who has instilled this dispassionate attitude in Stevens.

On his deathbed, the elder Mr. Stevens declares his love for Stevens and hopes that he has been a good father. Stevens can only reply that he hopes his father is feeling better. It is too late now for father and son to connect. A lifetime of restrained dignity and dedication has destroyed the relationship that should have been enjoyed between the two men.

Day 2, Afternoon

Day 2, Afternoon Summary

Stevens again resumes his thoughts on the qualities that make a great butler. He arrives at the conclusion that serving in a great household is one identifying characteristic. In Stevens' father's time, a great and worthy household was determined by its position on a social ladder of nobility. Now, Stevens believes, the rungs of the social ladder have been replaced by a wheel. Each great household is at the hub of the wheel, and the ancillary spokes are made up of everyone associated with the house. It is the duty of a great butler to get as close to the hub as possible.

Stevens adds that a great household is also judged by its moral fiber and contributions to society. Stevens feels fortunate and proficient in having served at Darlington Hall for so many years, which has exhibited high moral fiber and great societal contributions. He credits this road trip for allowing him the time for this reflection.

Continuing on his journey, Stevens finds himself on a narrow lane when the car begins to emit a heated smell. Stevens is able to drive to a large Victorian style house for aid. The chauffeur of the house assists Stevens by adding water to the radiator, and in the course of the conversation the chauffeur learns that Stevens works at Darlington Hall. The chauffeur ponders the name for a few moments and asks Stevens if he had ever worked for the infamous Lord Darlington. Stevens replies that he is in the employ of the current owner, Mr. Farraday.

The chauffeur urges Stevens to visit a nearby pond for its serene beauty, a suggestion that Stevens indulges. Stevens is grateful to have been guided to the spot, which he would not have found on his own. Watching the people scattered on the banks with their fishing poles, Stevens wishes he were dressed more appropriately so that he could go wading. He is content for the moment, though, to sit quietly on the bench with his own thoughts.

Stevens' thoughts revert to the question posed to him by the chauffeur. Stevens wonders why he felt compelled to be so evasive in his answer. Stevens is reminded of another situation not too long ago, when one of Mr. Farraday's guests asked Stevens the same question. Stevens' denial that Lord Darlington employed him puts Mr. Farraday in an awkward position with his guests, because Mr. Farraday told his guests about Stevens' high profile career in Darlington's employ. Stevens can only explain his action by comparing the situation to that of a divorced woman in the company of her current husband. It is impolite to mention the former spouse. Stevens thinks about the foolish things that people continue to say about Lord Darlington these days. He does not want people to get the idea that he is embarrassed about working for Darlington, and he feels that these little white lies may belie his true feelings.

Day 2, Afternoon Analysis

Stevens is conflicted by duty and his own personal observations related to his employment with Lord Darlington. Stevens' mention that a great household is measured by its moral fiber foreshadows later revelations of Darlington's activities. Clearly, some ethical situation continues to haunt Stevens, evidenced by his denial of having worked for Lord Darlington. Stevens hopes to escape the tarnish that is on Darlington's reputation. This tarnish reduces Stevens in his own mind, because the greatness of a butler is determined by the greatness of the household.

The author utilizes the pond scene to symbolize Stevens' mental state at the time. As he sits gazing at the water, his thoughts reflect back from the pond's surface. Although it seems placid, it is unsettled below the surface, mirroring Stevens' unsettled mind. Stevens is also confined to sitting on the bench at the water's edge due to his inappropriate clothing, and the reader understands that Stevens has spent his entire life sitting on the edge, observing others' lives, for fear of doing the wrong thing.

Day 3, Morning

Day 3, Morning Summary

Stevens experiences fitful sleep at the inn where he spends the night. In the morning, he explores the town of Taunton, Somerset, and sees the sign for the Giffen silver polish company as he sits in a tearoom for a midmorning break. Stevens remembers that Giffen had been the premiere choice for polishing silver back in the days when that activity was practiced with more discipline. In those days, the state of sheen on silver was an important indicator of the household's greatness.

Stevens remembers an occasion when a visiting German ambassador, filled with apprehension over an upcoming dinner, experienced a marked change in demeanor upon seeing the excellence of the silver. Recalling the great attention surrounding the ambassador's visit, Stevens notes that the people who wanted to be dinner guests alongside him are the same people who have the audacity to insinuate that Lord Darlington hosted Nazis.

Stevens staunchly upholds no knowledge of Lord Darlington's affiliation with the Nazi party and adamantly denies the rumors that Lord Darlington has anti-Semite tendencies. Even further, Lord Darlington stopped any association with the British Union of Fascists when their true purpose was revealed. To Stevens' recollection, Darlington Hall hosted only the noblest people from many walks of British and world politics and society.

Veering back to the topic of polishing silver and the importance Lord Darlington placed on the activity, Stevens cannot help but compare Mr. Farraday's nonchalance about the same topic. Stevens ponders Miss Kenton's letter again and wonders about her true intentions. He decides that it is better not to speculate, since he will see Miss Kenton within forty-eight hours.

Day 3, Morning Analysis

The political situation increases in intensity over the years at Darlington Hall, and Stevens does his best to distance himself from the events and the guests. Always mindful of his place, Stevens has not explored the thought that Lord Darlington may have been involved in inappropriate and tragic political scenarios. The road trip has allowed Stevens to reflect on the activities and add his own perspective.

The author masterfully utilizes the activity of silver polishing as one of the flashback memories. The polished silverware reflects the faces of those who hold the silver, and these reflections symbolize both Stevens' memory of the past and his current reflections on the past. The activity of obsessively polishing silver focuses attention on the surface. As with the symbolism of the pond, no one examines the hidden activity below the surface. Only outward appearances matter. Stevens wants no tarnish on his own

reputation from Lord Darlington's alleged Nazi activities, and the metaphor of the silver polish is brilliantly constructed.

Day 3, Evening

Day 3, Evening Summary

Stevens returns to the issue of Lord Darlington's alleged anti-Semitism. He recalls an incident where two maids are dismissed because they are Jewish. At this time, Lord Darlington has been keeping company with a woman named Carolyn Barnet, whose influence runs beyond social issues. Darlington informs Stevens that no Jews should be allowed to work in the household. Further, the two Jewish housemaids need to be relieved of their duties immediately.

It is Stevens' duty to inform Miss Kenton of this recent order from Lord Darlington. Miss Kenton's outrage at such a ridiculous request prompts her to claim that she herself will resign if the two girls are to be dismissed. Stevens tries to get Miss Kenton to understand that personal opinions have no place in the issue and asks that Miss Kenton speak to the girls in the morning before sending them to him for formal dismissal. For some time after the maids leave Darlington Hall, Stevens chides Miss Kenton about the resignation, since she did not follow through on her threat to leave.

Over a year later, Stevens sees Miss Kenton attending to some needlework in the summerhouse and approaches the subject of her resignation once more. Miss Kenton reveals to Stevens just how close she had come to actually leaving Darlington Hall. Unfortunately, she had nowhere else to go, and this prevented her from following through on her plan. Having no family but an old aunt and no other lead on employment, Miss Kenton remained at Darlington Hall despite her disgust at the way the Jewish girls were dismissed for no good cause.

Stevens now reveals to Miss Kenton the fact that Lord Darlington has admitted to the injustice of dismissing the girls. He has asked Stevens to try to locate them to offer some form of compensation. Stevens is happy to share this news because he has been just as distressed as Miss Kenton. Miss Kenton is shocked to hear that Stevens was upset by the incident, since he displayed no emotion at all on the topic at the time.

Miss Kenton was deeply upset over the termination of the girls, and knowing that Stevens shared her feelings would have meant so much to her. Stevens can only reply that naturally a person would be upset over such a situation and that should have been evident.

Stevens recalls another incident involving a housemaid named Lisa, who came to Darlington Hall with a cloud of suspicion and not much experience. Stevens is opposed to hiring the girl, but Miss Kenton sees something in Lisa and hires her anyway. Within a short time, Lisa is working quite capably under Miss Kenton's tutelage.

Stevens and Miss Kenton have begun to have short meetings each evening to drink cocoa and discuss the household. Stevens is very deliberate in reassuring the reader

that these meetings are of the highest professional tone. One evening, Miss Kenton chides Stevens about always mentioning Lisa. She wonders if Stevens is attracted to the pretty girl and whether that is why Stevens did not want to hire her. Of course, Stevens denies any such outrageous claim.

In less than a year, Lisa runs off with the second footman of the house. She leaves a note declaring love for the young man and with no mention of thanks to Miss Kenton for hiring her and training her. Miss Kenton is distraught over the situation and concedes to Stevens that he had been right about Lisa all along. Stevens replies only that Miss Kenton has worked wonders with the girl. Miss Kenton's distress prompts her to say that Lisa had had a real future ahead of her and she has thrown it all away on some boy and the foolishness of love.

Stevens recalls another uncomfortable situation related to Miss Kenton. She comes into the butler's pantry unannounced one evening. Stevens is reading a book. Unaccustomed to invasions of his privacy, Stevens asks Miss Kenton to please leave so that he may enjoy his spare time in the way he chooses. Instead of acquiescing, Miss Kenton perseveres and wants to see the book that Stevens is reading.

Stevens is further outraged when Miss Kenton moves uncomfortably close and pulls the book from his hand. She sees that the book is not exotic at all, simply a little love story. Stevens demands that Miss Kenton leave the room. Stevens explains to the reader that the book was a love story, but books like that are in the Darlington library for guests. Stevens likes to read them in order to improve his language skills.

In all the driving and reminiscing today, Stevens has neglected to watch the fuel gauge. He finds himself out of gas on a back road. He is at an inconvenient distance from anywhere he might find gas, especially at the late hour. Deciding to descend a steep hill into a neighboring village, Stevens encounters a local man named Mr. Taylor who invites Stevens to stay the night.

The news of Stevens' predicament spreads quickly in the little town, and soon the Taylor cottage is filled with residents who want to view the dignified Stevens. The local people take Stevens to be some sort of dignitary because of his fine car, elegant clothes and dignified speech. Stevens does not disclose his full situation and does not deny a life of privilege, even admitting that he has met dignitaries such as Winston Churchill. The only person who sees through Stevens is the local doctor, who does not say anything that will embarrass Stevens. The doctor offers Stevens a ride to get fuel for his car the next morning. Stevens retires in order to escape any more scrutiny from the townspeople.

Stevens remembers feeling uncomfortable about the deception about who he really is, but he thinks that no real harm has been done. Stevens' mind wanders to other topics that arose in the cottage, especially that of personal dignity versus the dignity of a people as a whole, such as a country. Stevens recalls an instance that elucidates this point.

Late one night, Stevens is called to the drawing room, where Lord Darlington is entertaining some gentlemen guests. Upon Stevens' entering the room, the other men become silent and one of the men beckons Stevens to approach. The guest declares that the group has a question to pose to Stevens. He asks whether it is the debt situation in America or the abandonment of the gold standard that accounts for the present low levels of trade. Stevens can only reply that he unable to be of assistance in this matter.

To the delight of the others in the room, the guest poses two more similar questions, to which Stevens replies that he can be of no assistance. Stevens' lack of adequate information on the topics validates the gentleman's point that the common people want democratic rights but are not well enough informed to be able to make important decisions. Lord Darlington relieves Stevens of embarrassment and dismisses him from the room.

In Stevens' mind, this situation validates the topics discussed in the Taylors' cottage. There are topics that the little man will never be able to comprehend, and this leaves the working people always at the mercy of those who are in higher positions. However, there is no shame or indignity in this, and showing loyalty to an employer is the only position to uphold.

Stevens justifies in his own mind that, however misguided his former employer may have been, Stevens' service to Lord Darlington was of first rate caliber. It is not Stevens' fault if Lord Darlington's work and reputation was ultimately tarnished, and any service of Stevens' should not be viewed with regret or shame.

Day 3, Evening Analysis

Historically, the novel keeps pace with the global events occurring in the period between the two world wars. Lord Darlington takes the gentleman's position that the country should extend some dignity to a defeated foe and works to release Germany from the conditions of the peace treaty. Darlington's graciousness and willingness to entertain differing political views, though, puts him in jeopardy of hosting dangerous people.

During this time, the guests who frequent the house are Nazi sympathizers who convince the malleable Darlington to adopt their anti-Semitic position. This results in the situation involving the termination of the Jewish housemaids. Stevens is also an unwitting pawn in this horrific movement, but later he justifies his actions as unquestioning service to an exceptional employer who just happened to be misguided.

The theme of duty is overriding for Stevens, and the Jewish girls are dismissed, to Miss Kenton's horror. Only a year later, Stevens reveals his own distaste for the incident, and Miss Kenton is shocked to find out that he had shared the same opinions at the time but never expressed them. To Stevens, duty overrides any personal emotions, a position that he will later come to regret to some degree.

The closer Stevens gets to seeing Miss Kenton again, the more vibrant and personal his memories of the woman become. When Miss Kenton interrupts Stevens reading a romance novel, she is trying to get to know Stevens on a more personal level. This thought terrifies the man. Stevens cannot admit to having romantic or personal feelings and tells the reader (and himself) that reading love stories is intended only to improve one's vocabulary.

Stevens continues to struggle to justify his life of service to Lord Darlington. Moments of humiliation and embarrassment, such as the one in the drawing room when the guests take delight in Stevens' lack of information on world politics and economy, have been tucked away in the back of his mind. Stevens justifies them as the law of nature. There are definite class distinctions in the world, and those who are in the employ of others must understand that their limited knowledge is part of their place in society.

Day Four, Afternoon

Day Four, Afternoon Summary

Stevens has finally arrived at Little Compton, the town where Miss Kenton lives, and is having tea at the Rose Garden Hotel. Stevens begins to doubt his meeting with Miss Kenton, since he did not receive a letter confirming that she would meet with him. He had asked that she send word to the hotel if a meeting was not possible and no such message has arrived.

There is still another hour or so before the planned meeting time with Miss Kenton, so Stevens sips his tea and watches the pouring rain outside the hotel window. The rain comes as a surprise to Stevens, who spent a pleasant day's drive after refueling his car.

Stevens remembers the previous day. The doctor from the village picks Stevens up at the Taylor cottage as promised and brings along enough fuel to get Stevens to the next town. After the exchange of pleasantries, the doctor asks Stevens if he is a manservant, and Stevens reveals his current situation as butler at Darlington Hall. The doctor had thought as much from the conversation in the Taylors' cottage the previous evening.

Stevens contends that it had not been his intention to deceive anyone, and the doctor understands how the confusion may have occurred. The local townspeople are not used to seeing someone of Stevens' caliber and automatically assumed him to be a dignitary of some sort. The doctor continues to say that the people of the town are good people. They say they want change but ultimately resist it in every way. Stevens cannot help but notice a hint of disgust in the doctor's tone, and the physician reveals that he believed in socialism until he met these people.

The doctor then surprises Stevens by asking about Stevens' view on dignity, to which Stevens can only reply that it is hard to explain in just a few words. Fortunately, the pair has arrived at Stevens' abandoned car, and the doctor is quite appreciative of such a fine automobile. After pouring the gas into the car's tank, the doctor takes his leave, and Stevens is once more on his way.

Sitting in the hotel, Stevens' thoughts once more turn to Miss Kenton, and he vaguely recalls a past incident, prompted either by the death of Miss Kenton's aunt or some other forgotten occurrence. Stevens stops at Miss Kenton's door in the long hallway of the servant's quarters one night. On this same night, Lord Darlington's godson, Mr. Cardinal, has arrived unexpectedly, hoping to spend the night at Darlington Hall. Mr. Cardinal is a journalist on international affairs, and Lord Darlington does not always receive his writing positively. Stevens informs Mr. Cardinal that Lord Darlington has guests arriving after dinner, but Mr. Cardinal may join Lord Darlington for dinner. The arrangement suits Mr. Cardinal, who claims to have work that requires his attention and will keep him occupied all evening.

After informing Lord Darlington of Mr. Cardinal's arrival, Stevens finds Mr. Cardinal in the drawing room seeming a bit restless. Mr. Cardinal asks Stevens who is coming to Darlington Hall this evening, and Stevens replies that he does not know. Stevens locates Miss Kenton to inform her that Mr. Cardinal will require a room for the evening. The housekeeper says that she will attend to it before leaving for the night. Miss Kenton reminds Stevens that they had discussed her going out this evening and had agreed that it was fine for her to be gone for the night.

As Stevens turns to leave, Miss Kenton calls him back. She tells him that a suitor has asked Miss Kenton to marry him, and she must give her answer this evening. The suitor will be leaving for another town in two weeks, and this would require her to leave Darlington Hall. She wants Stevens to be prepared to replace her. Stevens very professionally congratulates Miss Kenton and says that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Miss Kenton adds that she has not yet decided on whether or not to marry, but she wants to give Stevens a little forewarning.

Stevens excuses himself to attend to his duties. He encounters Miss Kenton one more time, and the housekeeper asks if her services are required in the house this evening. Stevens replies that Miss Kenton is free to leave and pursue her evening activities. There is absolutely no reason why Miss Kenton should not go and enjoy herself.

At dinner, Lord Darlington and Mr. Cardinal share strained conversation, as Mr. Cardinal attempts to learn who the guests for the evening are. After dinner, Lord Darlington and Mr. Cardinal engage in a heated exchange. After the exchange cools down, Stevens overhears Lord Darlington warning Mr. Cardinal that he trusts the younger man to keep the confidence they have shared.

Shortly after, the guests arrive at Darlington Hall, including the German Ambassador and two other gentlemen Stevens cannot identify. At the same time, the security guard rings for Stevens to identify Miss Kenton, who is returning home and trying to enter the house. Stevens comments that he hopes Miss Kenton has had a pleasant evening, and the woman announces that she has accepted her suitor's marriage proposal. Stevens offers his congratulations and excuses himself to attend to Lord Darlington and his guests. Miss Kenton is incredulous at Stevens' reserved reaction to her leaving after all her years of service. Stevens repeats his congratulations but insists that there are matters of importance to which he must attend.

Stevens resumes his post outside the drawing room, and soon Mr. Cardinal summons Stevens for more brandy. He asks the butler to sit with him for a few moments. Mr. Cardinal tries to determine who is meeting with Lord Darlington in the drawing room, but Stevens will not reveal any names. Mr. Cardinal wonders if Stevens is aware of the important event that is occurring at the house tonight. Stevens declares that it is not his role to be curious, only of service.

Mr. Cardinal has concerns that Lord Darlington is being played for a fool on the international political scene. He believes that the Nazis are manipulating Lord Darlington and capitalizing on the man's character and reputation as a gentleman. According to Mr.

Cardinal, Hitler has used Lord Darlington as a means to infiltrate propaganda into England, bypassing any foreign relations officials. Mr. Cardinal continues that Hitler is working through Lord Darlington to arrange meetings with England's Prime Minister and King.

Lord Darlington rings for Stevens and requests a bottle of port. This requires Stevens to walk past Miss Kenton's door in the servants' long quarters hallway. Upon retrieving the bottle, Stevens pauses for a few moments outside Miss Kenton's door and knows intuitively that the woman is inside crying. Stevens wants to knock to inquire about her well being but is hastened on by his task to serve the port.

Day Four, Afternoon Analysis

The plot reaches a climax for Stevens both personally and professionally in this chapter. Mr. Cardinal reveals Lord Darlington's part in Nazi activities, and Miss Kenton announces her imminent departure and engagement. Stevens' complete inability to express emotions has paralyzed him in regards to Miss Kenton. Although he clearly cares for her and she for him, Stevens cannot allow himself any expression of feelings in spite of Miss Kenton's repeated attempts to elicit some response. Unwavering loyalty and sense of duty has just cost Stevens any hope of a personal life with Miss Kenton, and he cannot bring himself to respond in any way.

Stevens' lack of emotions also leaves us without a clear understanding of his opinions on Lord Darlington's Nazi associations. He does not reveal any personal observations. He only reiterates that his duty is to serve. Mr. Cardinal's allegations, however, shed light on the insidious activities in which Lord Darlington has almost unwittingly participated. Ironically, Lord Darlington's character as a dignified gentleman has placed him in such a dangerous situation.

Day 6, Evening

Day 6, Evening Summary

Stevens sits on a bench at a pier and recalls the meeting with Miss Kenton two days ago. The pair sits for two hours and discusses old times and acquaintances until Stevens summons the nerve to ask Miss Kenton about the intent of her letter. Miss Kenton is happy with her husband and her daughter, who is expecting a child. Stevens mentions that letters from Miss Kenton in the past may have indicated otherwise, but Miss Kenton passes those off as temporary frustrations in the adjustment to marriage.

To Stevens' surprise, Miss Kenton reveals that she has wondered how her life might have been different had she and Stevens shared a life. Stevens is heartbroken at this revelation, and his hopes are dashed as Miss Kenton reveals her intentions to remain with her husband. Stevens and Miss Kenton part with the melancholy of friends who know they will never see each other again.

Now, as he sits on the bench with the other visitors awaiting the turning on of the pier lights, Stevens converses with a stranger who has also spent a lifetime in service as a butler. Stevens laments not making his own mistakes and only supporting another man in his life's goals. The old man advises Stevens to not judge himself or his employer too harshly. The stranger encourages Stevens to look ahead and says that the evening is really the best part of the day. Stevens quietly vows to maximize the time that remains in his life and plans to surprise Mr. Farraday with even more enthusiastic service than before.

Day 6, Evening Analysis

Stevens' hopes of Miss Kenton's return are dashed, and the disappointment is exacerbated when Miss Kenton admits that she wondered what a live with Stevens would have been like. This is a crushing heartbreak, but Stevens bears it with his normal reserve. He watches the only person to whom he was ever close walk out of his life forever.

In the end of the novel, Stevens is at the pier at dusk. This symbolically represents that Stevens is in the waning years of his life, his life's evening. The lights coming on symbolize the stranger's advice. It is best not to look back on one's life. Looking forward is the only sane thing to do, and any great butler knows how to best utilize what remains of his days. The ending is bittersweet, as Stevens resolves to return to his life with renewed energy for service. Will he participate in his own life, or only participate in the service of Mr. Farraday?

Characters

Lord Darlington

Lord Darlington is Stevens's original employer, beginning in the 1920s, and Stevens nar- rates his recollections of Lord Darlington throughout the novel. At the time of the novel, he has died, and his estate has been sold to an American man. Lord Darlington is proper, reserved, determined, and well-mannered. He is most comfortable keeping his relationship with Stevens as formal as possible, so much so that when he needs to discuss anything with Stevens, he pretends to be engrossed in a reference book while speaking.

Lord Darlington feels strongly that Germany had been mistreated by the restrictive Treaty of Versailles, and he resolves to do something about it. As he becomes enmeshed in international politics, however, he allows himself to be manipulated by the German regime to spread propaganda in England. These actions indicate that he is shortsighted, naïve, and not the best judge of character. As a result, he earns a shameful reputation in England and dies in disgrace.

Mr. Farraday

Mr. Farraday is Stevens's current employer. He is an American businessman who has bought Darlington Hall and wants to keep the staff employed there. Although most of the staff has left, he is happy to have Stevens, a "real old English butler." Mr. Farraday seems less interested in immersing himself in English culture than in enjoying the novelty of the change. He is carefree and often makes jokes to or about Stevens, which makes Stevens very uncomfortable. At the same time, Farraday is considerate and offers to loan Stevens his car for a vacation.

Miss Kenton

Miss Kenton (known as Mrs. Benn after her marriage) is the housekeeper at Darlington Hall until she leaves to get married. She is very professional and detail-oriented in her work and staff management, and she resents the arrogance with which Stevens generally speaks to her when she first arrives at Darlington Hall. She is not intimidated by Stevens and does not hesitate to voice her opinions to him. When he tells her he must let two of the maids go at Lord Darlington's order (because they are Jewish), Miss Kenton is quick to express her outrage. At the same time, she respects Stevens and wants to find out more about the man behind the butler. In fact, she develops a romantic interest in him. She is also realistic, and when she realizes that Stevens will never open up to her, she accepts a marriage proposal and leaves Darlington Hall.

Miss Kenton is not afraid to express her emotions, although she does so in as respectful a way as possible. When she first comes to Darlington Hall, she attempts to

demonstrate her thoughtfulness by bringing Stevens a vase of flowers for his room. Not until she reunites with Stevens after twenty years does she admit that she once hoped for romance between them. Although her marriage goes through cycles, she ultimately decides that it is best to stay with her husband.

Mr. Stevens

Stevens is the book's narrator. He is a butler in his sixties and has served Darlington Hall for over thirty years. While taking a short vacation on which he goes to see Miss Kenton, he reflects on his past and on the decisions he has made (and not made) along the way. He realizes that he has put his sense of duty above all, including his family, his emotional needs, and his good judgment. He deeply admired his past employer, Lord Darlington, but he now realizes that this man was not as great a gentleman as Stevens needed to believe he was. Stevens operates on the idea that the best way to serve the world is to serve a great man who does important things. That Lord Darlington was a Nazi sympathizer who was manipulated in the years leading up to World War II creates moral tension within Stevens as he thinks back on those years.

The reader comes to know Stevens through the stories he tells and the way in which he tells them. He is reserved, formal, disciplined, and detailoriented, all of which is important to his position as a butler. He believes in tradition and does not realize that he has become an anachronism. Through his stories, the reader sees that he was□ and is□an ideological chameleon. His beliefs and feelings are dictated by his employer. When Lord Darlington thinks it is best to fire the Jewish maids, Stevens agrees. And when Lord Darlington later says that doing so was a terrible mistake, Stevens agrees.

In his working relationship with Miss Kenton, Stevens avoids intimacy of any kind, including the slightest display of emotion. He seems to have no personality, no self, beyond the qualities necessary for his position. This is because for Stevens, being a butler is not merely a job, it is the core of his identity. At the end of the book, however, he realizes that he has sacrificed his humanity in the name of duty and dignity.

William Stevens

William Stevens is Stevens's father, and also a lifelong butler. At the opening of the novel, he has been dead for over thirty years; his son recalls him in extended flashbacks. Stevens admires his father for his years of service and for the stories he has heard about the dignity with which his father carried out his duties. When the elder Stevens becomes unemployed in later years, the younger Stevens secures him a position as an under-butler in Darlington Hall.

The elder Stevens and his son do not share a warm relationship. They are both focused exclusively on their jobs, and the elder Stevens is abrupt when his son tries to talk to him. He keeps his small room extremely tidy, having few personal items. He is proud and therefore resents his son's limiting his household duties after he trips with a full tray. When he falls ill, he becomes reflective and tries to reach out to his son. He realizes

that he was not a good father, but he also seems to realize that it is too late to redress his personal failings.

Themes

Duty

Duty and dedication are at the heart of this novel. Stevens has lived his life in pursuit of perfect dutifulness. He has willingly made every personal sacrifice along the way, and when he realizes what he has given up in life, it is too late. He cannot reconnect with his family members because they are all dead, he cannot choose a different vocation, and he cannot marry and enjoy romantic love. As he made these sacrifices, he did so gladly, because he felt that the best way to be of service in the world was to serve a great gentleman. By convincing himself that Lord Darlington was such a man, Stevens deceived himself into believing he was living honorably. Sadly, he allowed himself to be so blinded by duty that he ignored his own judgment and needs.

Stevens's father provides a role model for his son's extreme devotion to duty. Stevens recalls a story about his father in which a general was coming to visit his employer. This general was responsible for the needless death of the elder Stevens's other son, who was under the general's command at the time. The elder Stevens understandably feels deep loathing for this man, yet when he is called on to act as his valet, he does so with emotionless dedication. The elder Stevens's employer had offered to allow his butler to leave the house for the duration of the general's stay, yet he refused. To him, as to his son, duty came before anything and everything else. It is little wonder, then, that Stevens chose to keep performing his duties without hesitation when his father died. In fact, Stevens comments on that evening when his father died and there was a banquet for the important international guests. He states, "For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph." His triumph is that he orchestrated a well-run banquet and did not waver from his duties even when his father died. In other words, he was the picture of dignity and duty.

Related to the theme of duty is patriotism, because both come from dedication to a larger entity. Stevens is deeply patriotic and loves his native England, although he has seen very little of it. In his mind, he has seen the best of England in the great people who have visited Darlington Hall over the years. When he embarks on his trip, however, he has the opportunity to take in England's expansive landscape. He finds it utterly breathtaking and perfectly beautiful. In a way, he projects himself into the landscape, because he finds it beautiful in its understatement and its confidence in knowing that it is beautiful. He imagines that other countries have stunning features, too, but what he admires about England's landscape is its unwillingness to try too hard to be noticed. On day one in Salisbury, he writes, "It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it."

Hindsight

As Stevens leaves his microcosm of Darlington Hall, his mind slowly wanders from familiar matters (great butlers, dignity, and the staff plan) to less familiar, more personal, matters. This leads him to reflect on his past and to come to certain realizations in hindsight. As much as he admired Lord Darlington and as deeply dedicated as he was to serving him, he now realizes that Lord Darlington was not the great gentleman Stevens needed to believe he was. Upon reflection, Stevens understands that his employer lacked the wisdom, power, and decency Stevens once believed he possessed. This realization is very troubling to Stevens, who made profound sacrifices to serve his employer. He grapples with this realization, concluding that he is not to blame because, after all, he merely carried out his duties with the dignity appropriate to a butler. At the end of day three, he reflects:

How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? Throughout the years I served him, it was he and he alone who weighed up evidence and judged it best to proceed in the way he did, while I simply confined myself, quite properly, to affairs within my own professional realm.

The irony, of course, is that at the time Stevens was not concentrating solely on his professional obligations; his need to serve a "great gentleman" led him to believe that Lord Darlington was something he was not. By the end of his trip, Stevens also realizes that he had the opportunity for love, but he let it go. Now it is too late.

The character of Stevens's father provides foreshadowing. As he approaches death, the elder Stevens shares a rare moment of attempted tenderness with his son. He asks if he has been a good father, and supposes he has not. The elder Stevens seems to realize at the end of his life that he has wasted his years focusing on being a good butler rather than spending them being a good father or a good person. The younger Stevens fails to understand the significance of this exchange and thus loses the opportunity to learn from it. As a result, he too finds himself, late in life, regretting choices he made in the past.

Style

First-Person Narration

For the most part, the style of *The Remains of the Day* flows from the voice of Stevens, whose memories provide the novel's text. The entire book is his account of the past and present, which gives the reader a distinct impression of his character. Stevens's style is formal, courteous, and longwinded. He has a tendency to be very precise in his communication, to overthink matters, and to share his every thought. For example, rather than simply explaining that Mr. Farraday's banter makes him uncomfortable, Stevens rambles on with reasons why he is unable to engage with his employer in this way, with what he imagines Mr. Farraday thinks of him, and with his judgment that his inability to banter is a failing of his duties. He returns to this concern repeatedly.

As Stevens relates events of the past, all the while emphasizing the admiration he felt for Lord Darlington, it becomes clear that Stevens is an unreliable narrator. Besides his unwillingness to assess Lord Darlington realistically, there are inconsistencies in his accounts of the past. For example, he credits both Miss Kenton and Lord Darlington with saying about his father, "These errors may be trivial in themselves, Mr. Stevens, but you must yourself realize their larger significance." At a deeper level, Stevens is unreliable because he has an underdeveloped identity and thus has come to experience life through the filters of what he believes is expected of him.

Because the reader has only Stevens's interpretation and recollection of events, there is no way to know what Lord Darlington, Miss Kenton, Stevens's father, or Mr. Farraday experienced. As the reader gets to know Stevens better, the words and actions of others are easier to interpret despite the fact that Stevens is often unable to see them clearly. Still, the reader is limited by the exclusive narration of Stevens. This points to the fact that *The Remains of the Day* is in many ways a character study of Stevens; it is unnecessary to Ishiguro's intentions to include the points of view of other characters.

Tragedy and Comedy

Part of the novel's realism lies in its inclusion of both tragic and comic elements. This makes the novel feel less manufactured and manipulated and more like an honest telling of a man's story. Readers enjoy the comedy that stems from Stevens's stiff demeanor in the face of unusual circumstances. For example, Lord Darlington asks Stevens to tell his godson the "facts of life" in the midst of preparing for a houseful of important international guests. Without the additional pressure of the guests, Stevens would be ill-equipped to have such a candid and heartfelt conversation with a near stranger, but the distractions of preparing for guests add to the comedy. Stevens struggles to get the boy alone and then talks around the subject by extolling the virtues of nature. The young man, of course, has no idea what Stevens is trying to do, and because of ongoing interruptions, Stevens is never successful in telling the boy what he

ostensibly needs to know. Also comic is Stevens's preoccupation with his American employer's love of banter. Despite his intense discomfort with this type of exchange, Stevens makes a pathetic attempt at being witty. The reader is as embarrassed for him as he is for himself.

At the same time, the novel contains tragic incidents, such as when Stevens's father dies and Stevens continues with his domestic duties. This is tragic because Stevens places duty above anything else, and also because there is the suggestion that Stevens does not know how to react to the news of his father's death. He has become so emotionless in his occupation that he is not moved like most people are upon the death of a loved one. That Stevens places himself second to his occupation is in itself tragic. He forgoes developing a sense of self-worth, enjoying personal relationships, and the possibility of love, all in the name of duty. In the end, he comes to regret much of his past, but he is in his sixties and has lost many years.

Historical Context

The 1919 Treaty of Versailles

World War I ended in 1918, and the victorious nations met at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to determine the fate of Germany, the loser. Representatives at the Conference included British Prime Minister Lloyd George, Italian Foreign Minister Giorgio Sonnino, French Premier Georges Clemenceau, and American President Woodrow Wilson. Because Germany was blamed for the war, it was forced to pay reparations and to dismantle its military. In addition, Germany was forced to give up its colonies and most of its means of trade (trains, merchant ships, etc.).

The Treaty of Versailles was not sustainable; its punitive terms undermined hopes of lasting peace by discouraging Germany's recovery and return to the European community. Although the leaders of the victorious governments generally supported the treaty, there were individuals and groups who felt that Germany was being treated too harshly. As fascism rose in Europe in the 1920s, many of these people sympathized with its stated goals. Postwar Germany accepted a democratic constitution, but a form of militaristic totalitarianism slowly emerged, promising to fulfill the people's wants more effectively and to protect them from communism. Mussolini rose to power in Italy in 1922, but not until 1933 did Hitler become Germany's chancellor.

The 1956 Suez Crisis

The Suez Canal is a human-made waterway in northeastern Egypt that acts as a valuable shortcut for trade among Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. In 1854, a French diplomat established the Universal Company of the Maritime Suez Canal. This organization built and maintained the canal, enlisting the help of Egyptian officials. The company was given authority to build the canal and, in return, ownership of the canal would go to Egypt after ninety-nine years.

Originally, the company was a privately held Egyptian entity, whose stock was owned by Egypt and France. In 1875, however, Great Britain bought Egypt's interests because the canal was crucial to its nautical power and colonization plans. In 1936 an agreement was made that allowed Britain to employ defense forces in the canal area, which meant control of the passageway. As Britain's power over the canal grew, Egyptian nationalists began to de- mand that Britain evacuate. In 1954, Britain and Egypt signed a seven-year agreement calling for the gradual removal of Britain's military from the area. By June 1956, British troops were gone and Egyptian troops replaced them.

In July, however, the United States and Great Britain withdrew their promises to provide financial help for constructing the Aswan High Dam. Their refusal to assist was based on the fact that Egypt had become friendly with Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. In response to this withdrawal of funds, Egyptian officials seized the Suez Canal in

order to rechannel its proceeds to the dam project. This loss of income was significant to Britain because it was one of the main causes of the decline of British colonization.

Critical Overview

The Remains of the Day is a critical and commercial success. Reviewers' glowing notices of the novel praise its characterization, language, tone, and thematic content. Lawrence Graver of the *New York Times Book Review* calls the novel "a dream of a book: a beguiling comedy of manners that evolves almost magically into a profound and heart-rending study of personality, class, and culture." In a review for London's *Observer,* noted author Salman Rushdie praises the novel for its ability to simultaneously present surface understatement and tremendous underlying tension. In the *Christian Science Monitor,* critic Merle Rubin declares, "Delicate, devastating, thoroughly ironic, yet never harsh, this is a novel whose technical achievements are matched by its insightfulness." David Gurewich of *New Criterion* deems the novel a "remarkable" book in which "the pitch is perfect." Commenting on the comic tradition of butlers in English literature, Hermione Lee of *New Republic* observes, "Butlers in British fiction are a joke. . . Ishiguro's cunning is to invoke these associations □Stevens, after all, is a comic figure, pompous, funny, antiquated, and obtuse□and turn them to serious ends." Ihab Hassan in *World and I* adds that Ishiguro transcends the tradition, or "more precisely, he perfects and subverts it at the same time. He does so with immaculate craft. . . . "

Not only do critics find Stevens tragic and sympathetic, but they also praise Ishiguro's ability to create a consistent and believable voice for a character so unlike himself. Galen Strawson of the *Times Literary Supplement* writes that the book is both strong and delicate, adding that Stevens's voice "creates a context which allows Kazuo Ishiguro to put a massive charge of pathos into a single unremarkable phrase." Echoing this idea, Graver remarks that Ishiguro's "command of Stevens' corseted idiom is masterly," adding that the author's "tonal control of Stevens' repressive yet continually reverberating first-person voice is dazzling. So is his ability to present the butler from every point on the compass: with affectionate humor, tart irony, criticism, compassion, and full understanding." In the *New York Times,* Michiko Kakutani also praises Ishiguro's controlled tone and his portrayal of unfolding realization in Stevens's mind. He writes:

> By subtly modulating the flow of Stevens' memories and the nuances of his tone, by revealing to us the increasingly difficult emotional acrobatics that Stevens is forced to perform in order to remain in control, Mr. Ishiguro is able to create a portrait of the man that is uncompromisingly tough, and at the same time elegiac. He shows us the consequences of both emotional repression and misplaced loyalty, the costs of blindly holding onto values formed by another age. The result is an intricate and dazzling novel.

Joseph Coates of the *Chicago Tribune* applauds Ishiguro's use of an unreliable narrator to reveal so much about the character. Gurewich writes that Stevens is "a fully realized

character, through whom the author manages the world of his novel as sure-handedly as Stevens himself manages the beloved estate of Darlington Hall." He adds, "There is an almost-perfect harmony of style and substance in the book's relationship between the writer and the narrator. . . . " Rubin is struck by the complexity of Stevens's narrative; he remarks: "Stevens (by his own unwitting admission) has tailored his life to produce a complete façade. What makes his narrative so poignant as well as funny, its pathos and satire evenly matched, is the sincerity with which the façade has been cultivated." Hassan interprets Stevens as an allegorical representation of modern history, suggesting that Ishiguro intends to symbolize modern politics, class, and suffering in the character of an English butler.

Much is made of Ishiguro's Japanese roots, as many critics believe that this heritage deeply influences *The Remains of the Day.* They note that the themes of service, discipline, and duty are Japanese in nature and that the controlled, detached tone is typical of Japanese culture. Hassan, for example, asks, "Is the result a Japanese vision of England or, more slyly, an English version of Japan? Or is it both and neither, a vision simply of our condition, our world?" Gurewich comments on this at length, observing:

[W]hen Stevens admires the English landscape for
"the very *lack* of obvious drama or spectacle that sets
the beauty of our land apart," I cannot help thinking
how neatly his description fits some of the Japanese
criteria for beauty. Stevens' attention to detail is comparable
to an origami maker. . . Stevens' insistence
on ritual; his stoicism in performing his duties, especially
in the face of adversity; his loyalty to his
master that conflicts with his humanity□all of these
are prominent aspects of the Japanese collective psyche....

Similarly, Gabriele Annan of the *New York Review of Books* finds that Ishiguro's first three novels "are explanations, even indictments, of Japanese- ness," including *The Remains of the Day,* which features no Japanese characters. She explains that Ishiguro "writes about guilt and shame incurred in the service of duty, loyalty, and tradition. Characters who place too high□too Japanese □a price on these values are punished for it."

Although the majority of the reviews are positive, a handful of critics find fault in the book. Geoff Dyer of *New Statesman,* for example, suggests that the notion of narrative irony (in which the reader understands something the speaker says that the speaker does not) is trite. He believes that Stevens's voice is "coaxed" to achieve this irony and thus lacks integrity. Annan is impressed with Ishiguro's creation of the character of Stevens, but finds the novel's message anti-Japanese and unsatisfying. She explains that the novel "is too much a *roman à these* [a novel written to illustrate a social doctrine], and a judgmental one besides. Compared to his astounding narrative sophistication, Ishiguro's message seems quite banal. Be less Japanese, less bent on dignity, less false to yourself and others, less restrained and controlled."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Bussey holds a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is an independent writer specializing in literature. In the following essay, she refutes the body of criticism asserting that Ishiguro's novel is largely a Japanese novel.

The author of *The Remains of the Day,* Kazuo Ishiguro, was born in Japan and moved to England with his family when he was six years old. He has lived in England ever since, although he was reared with full awareness and practice of his Japanese heritage. Because of his Japanese background, many critics of the novel hasten to claim that it is Japanese in nature and content. The two novels preceding *The Remains of the Day* featured Japanese settings and characters, and this may be part of the impulse to categorize Ishiguro's third novel as also being Japanese. The idea is that Ishiguro has retained his Japanese worldview and simply filtered an English story through this way of interpreting the world. Critics point to the character of Stevens as evidence of the Japanese undercurrents of the novel. They observe that Stevens expresses himself in a detached tone and that he is driven by his sense of duty, loyalty, and service; that his lifestyle is characterized by propriety, ritual, discipline, and stoicism; and that he grapples with personal guilt and shame. Some critics go so far as to claim that Stevens's unhappy fate and empty feeling when he reaches his sixties is an indictment against being "too Japanese." That Ishiguro is both Japanese and English certainly warrants the assumption that he sees his world in a unique way, but to deem *The Remains of the Day* a Japanese story grossly diminishes his extraordinary accomplishment in the novel.

While every nation has a distinct culture, there are similarities among them. English culture and Japanese culture, although they are subject to the West-East dichotomy, share certain qualities. Yet critics are quick to attribute any overlapping characteristics to Ishiguro's Japanese influence. Both cultures have a history of well-defined, rigid social and political hierarchies. Both have developed a system of manners and accepted means of interacting that are considered "proper," and in both cases proper behavior is reserved, polite, and respectful. While Ishiguro's upbringing may have prompted him to respond to these cultural aspects in England differently than someone who knew only English culture, Ishiguro is far from unique in recognizing these qualities in England and the English. Readers and critics find *The Remains of the Day* realistic and insightful, and this is because he accurately portrays English aristocratic culture. Further, his portrayal is complex, as it depicts this culture in a time of transition when elitism and dependence on manners are making way for a new social order. The realism—which is so readily recognized by readers—comes from the fact that Ishiguro has drawn from the richness of England's own culture and social history to create his story. Had he included uniquely Japanese elements disguised as English elements, the story would not ring true. For critics to claim that Ishiguro's Japanese sensibility is somehow superimposed onto an English setting and cast of characters only taints the reading of the story.

It is also worth noting that the subject matter of *The Remains of the Day* is distinctly English. The central character is an English butler, a man who, by his own admission, holds a position unparalleled in any other country. Stevens reflects on day one, "It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true." If Ishiguro were trying to make a statement about Japanese culture, he would not put these words in his butler's (the supposed symbol of Japanese restraint) mouth. Besides the tradition of the butler, the novel addresses English aristocracy and its descent in the context of Europe in the years just after World War I. These are all uniquely English concerns and characteristics; they are not universal enough to symbolize anything else.

There are a number of other ways in which Stevens is not a suitable representative for the Japanese. He completely lacks a religious or philosophical foundation, for example, an element of Japanese culture that guides a person's decisionmaking and way of interpreting life. Stevens comes to realizations about himself not through meditation, reading, or music, but as a side effect of thinking about his career. He does not seek wisdom or honor; the latter is something he does not even want for himself; rather, he is content in deluding himself into believing that he is serving a great man. When he arrives at a personal crossroads, he has no resources on which to draw for insight. He has no religious convictions, philosophical inquiries, or mentor.

This relates to another way in which Stevens is decidedly un-Japanese. He has no sense of fam- ily whatsoever. While Japanese society is paternalistic and places a high value on the family unit, Stevens speaks passively about his brother, who died needlessly, and he has a stiff relationship with his father. Stevens and his father are both butlers, and they have transferred whatever energy and attention that would naturally go to family members into their profession. When Stevens's father attempts to make amends on his deathbed, Stevens merely responds that he is busy and has work to do. The years of distance between them cannot be bridged, and the night his father dies, Stevens chooses to continue working. He adds that his father would want him to go on performing his duties with dignity, and he is probably right. In fact, Stevens's father pretended to accept his other son's death rather than seize an opportunity for revenge. Does he do so because of a belief in karma? No, he does so because he values duty absolutely. His son, Stevens, does likewise.

Another aspect of Stevens that makes him an unlikely symbol of Japanese culture is his deep, though long repressed, need to be recognized as an individual. This need is at odds with the Japanese (and, more generally, the Eastern) emphasis on the collective, as opposed to the individual, experience. Once Stevens leaves Darlington Hall, he gradually realizes that he regrets not being more individualistic. He has ignored his potential and his personal needs, and at a level that is almost buried, he realizes that he deserves to be treated as an individual. This need is also revealed when he sees that locals in the town he visits on his way to Cornwall believe he is an important aristocrat, and he enjoys letting them think so. Having never felt important in his own right, he savors the experience. This indicates that his years of putting himself last are not true reflections of his desire or personality. Instead, these are learned behaviors that have

become second nature. Yet the truth of Stevens's desires can not be squelched, even after sixty years.

As a writer, Ishiguro is influenced by his dual heritages, but he has stated that his fictional influences are the British greats, such as Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford. If *The Remains of the Day* had been published anonymously, the criticism regarding the possible Japanese connection could be lifted out, and there would still be a Booker Prize and an impressive body of commentary about every aspect of the book. Because of the consistent portrayal of English culture and history, the distinctly English subject matter, and the many ways in which Stevens is not a good representative of Japanese culture, the claims of the novel's Japanese nature must be regarded as overstatements. Worse, the overemphasis by many critics on the author's Japanese roots only acts as a distraction to an impressive fictional work.

Source: Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on *The Remains of the Day,* in *Novels for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Rothfork asserts that Ishiguro's work "provides a particularly illuminating case study for postcolonial criticism . . . because of the way that his work has been 'translated' for Western audiences."

Although Commonwealth literature (from the Commonwealth of Nations, hence written in English) and postcolonial literature (translated into English) are taught in many English departments, such courses and collections remain problematic for at least two reasons. First, taxonomically the designations never escape their flawed origins. Thus Jayana Clerk and Ruth Siegel, editors of a recent anthology (1995), virtually apologize for their title, *Modern Literatures of the Non-Western World,* saying that they "faced the dilemma of using a negative term that derives from a Western perception". Similarly, the rationale for grouping works and the related supposition for survey courses is a sense of an underlying cultural history (e.g., American literature), which also informs other courses or genres that derive from that history. Lacking any comparable unity, postcolonial literature is presented as a hodgepodge assembly and is often associated with minority studies. By definition, minority views are supplemental; they frequently arise in reaction to majority views, and since they do not voice majority experience, they tend to be regarded as secondary and somewhat exotic.

Yet the views presented by Commonwealth writers are not minority views, though one would hardly know this from the scolding of critics such as Graham Parry who takes the most prominent Indian novelist, R. K. Narayan, to task for "the odd psychology of some of his characters whose emotional responses are often bizarre to a Western reader." Anglo-American readers' cannot understand the actions of Narayan's characters until they know something of the Hindu social psychology that defines normal behavior in Indian society. This, then, is the second problem: to understand something of a profoundly alien society requires a deeper shift in outlook than can be accomplished by an examination of an isolated text or even a collection of works.

Commonwealth writers are native to the regions and cultures they write about: the Caribbean, India, China and parts of Africa. In some measure an Anglo-American audience must appreciate the exotic element of such writing: how different the fictional characters and their situations are from what is ordinary and important in our experience. When this is ignored, critics often bluster, scorning the unfamiliar, or preach, asking for tolerance of the unfamiliar. Evidencing the evangelical approach, Clerk and Siegel hope that their anthology "helps cultivate an awareness that honors different cultural perspectives," as though assuming that it was the professed intent of each author to pitch his or her culture to an audience of North American undergraduates. We do not expect great works from our own tradition to be so transparent and pandering. William Walsh illustrates the bluster approach, concluding that Narayan's Mr Sampath "doesn't quite succeed" because of "an insufficiency of 'composition.'" Exasperated because he cannot explain the accomplished work, Walsh proclaims, "The novel's shape is oddly humpbacked, and repeated readings fail to convince me that I have missed some deeper and more structurally implicit unifying influence." What Walsh

could not feel was the Hindu atmosphere, which provides motives for the characters in the novel and themes for readers.

Criticism has recently become sensitive to the presumptive tone of male narrative voices, to racially white voices and to colonial voices. Critical explanations proceeding from such sensitivities, however, tend to remain dialectically two dimensional, assuming that truth can be discovered by stretching the text between two poles: male/female, white/black, majority/minority, America/the world. Moving from one pole to the other is regarded as significant and such movement in a protagonist's understanding and his/her subsequent moral growth provides the model for many Western novels. Nonetheless, the change is measured by distance from the initial pole, which continues to broadcast paradigm assumptions that postcolonial writers do not hear, because they are tuned into the cultural programs which shaped their childhoods. The non- Western cultures, in which postcolonial and Commonwealth writers typically spend their childhoods, construe identity and motives that often lack Western counterparts. In some cases there is no second pole, either similar to or opposite from the first.

To read postcolonial literature with insight, Anglo-Americans must recognize that cultures are discrete and incommensurable. Indian Hindus are not bizarre British Christians. Readers must accept that there are no Kantian categories of logic or a deep grammar that will explain everything. At the same time, the notion that critical tools should emerge from the culture they seek to explain may be more difficult to put into practice than in principle it might appear. Objections arise on two counts. First, the legacy from Plato through Kant, paralleled by theology, claims a transcendental logic capable of giving the true picture. Although postmodernism opposes this belief by stressing that any specific claim to the truth is necessarily grounded in a concrete language and historic culture, the second problem, as Bishop Berkeley might say, is that we only know what we know. Most readers of postcolonial and Commonwealth literature know only English and its associated culture; even when they do not explicitly assume that Anglo-American culture is normative, such readers are able only partially to escape or suspend the mindset, inevitably smuggling along implicit assumptions. The two problems thus reinforce each other: if one knows only one view, it becomes extremely difficult to imagine exactly where it diverges from the truth or where one culture differs from another.

In the case of postcolonial literature, therefore, the primary thing we need to bear in mind is that there is no neutral or obvious place to begin, a place where truth is bare and universal, which consequently can be used as a standard. This should not forestall critical effort, but should work recurrently to qualify judgments as cultural instead of true. In turn, it could be argued that criticisms of postcolonial literature must have a foot in both the culture of the reader and that of the writer, and must move beyond the confines of strictly literary analysis. Because postcolonial novels offer exotic material, the critical enterprise is closer to anthropology, which studies alien cultures, than sociology, which studies one's own culture. A theoretical basis for such anthropological criticism is provided by the prolific and readable work of McGill philosophy professor, Charles Taylor. Equally, comparative religion and comparative philosophy provide useful critical terms. Pioneered by Huston Smith, William Cantwell Smith and Joseph Campbell, the

discipline of comparative religions opposes the presumption of Christian apologetics to be the true religion. Comparative philosophy is an even younger field. The works of David Hall and Roger Ames on comparing Confucian China to ancient Greece are exemplary, just as Bernard Faure's *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* offers a postmodern reading of Zen Buddhism. Most recently the essays in *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives* (Fu & Heine, eds.) offer additional critical tools for readers of Asian postcolonial literature.

With respect to postcolonial/commonwealth writers themselves, one might observe that African- American culture has no doubt aided Western readers to appreciate the fiction of such African writers as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (James Ngugi) and Nadine Gordimer. The Caribbean worlds of V. S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon are also vaguely familiar, crisscrossing with reggae music and cruise holidays. India has produced many talented novelists who write in English (R. K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala) and of course the Western world has recently become very acquainted with the work and silencing of Salmon Rushdie. Despite the translation efforts of such publishers as Charles Tuttle in Tokyo and the awarding of the Nobel Prize to two Japanese novelists (Yasunari Kawabata and Kenzaburo De), East Asia remains enigmatic to most Western readers.

Among East Asian novelists who write in English, one name stands out, Kazuo Ishiguro. Born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan, Ishiguro came to England in 1960. His work provides a particularly illuminating case study for postcolonial criticism not merely because of the cross-cultural issues which his works address but also because of the way that his work has been "translated" for Western audiences. That is, thanks in part to Anthony Hopkins's fame, the movie version of Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day,* is probably the best known� and probably the most misunderstood�single work by a Commonwealth writer. The work presents the ambivalent reflections of an English butler who recalls highlights from his service to a prominent aristocrat who was involved in formulating national policy toward Nazi Germany. The movie was successful enough to provide a familiar world for a Pepsi Cola television ad in which an ancient butler shuffles through a cavernous English mansion to deliver a tantalizing can of the product sans a straw. Winning the Booker Prize in 1989, *The Remains of the Day* was preceded by two ear- lier novels, both set in Japan. *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) illustrates the ennui caused by defeat in WWII and the subsequent American occupation. The novel ends with a character recognizing that "It's not a bad thing at all, the old Japanese way," which the war has irrecoverably destroyed. *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) offers the postwar diary of a prominent painter who produced war propaganda for the government before and during WWII. The "floating world" refers to "the nighttime world of pleasure, entertainment and drink," which Ishiguro uses to symbolize basic tenets of Buddhism.

I will argue that these three novels need to be read as related in order to see that *The Remains of the Day* expresses a Buddhist criticism of Confucian ethics. Although this is a common theme in Japanese culture�which is largely formed by the tensional unity of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto, in somewhat the way that Western culture is formed by the tensional unity of Greek and Christian elements�the movie ignores this

BOOKRAGS

dimension, and instead renders stock Western formulas of lost love and moral outrage. Somehow the emotionally dead life of Mr. Stevens, the butler whose 1956 diary tells the story, is supposed to explain the blase British unconcern with anti-Semitism expressed in Neville Chamberlain's appeasement to Hitler. Although these elements, contained in a glossy picture of decrepit aristocracy, are obvious, what is not so easy is explaining how aristocratic haughtiness, and the last glimmer from the dying light of the Raj, serves to kindle Nazism. Western sentiment, if not morality, for example, would seem to dictate that Stevens should be chagrined to have neglected his father on his deathbed to arrange for a physician to treat the blistered feet of a French diplomat. Instead Stevens boasts: "Why should I deny it? For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph." Even more to the point, we expect Stevens to echo Miss Kenton's judgment□ "What a terrible mistake I've made with my life"□ about both his failed romance with her and his support of Lord Darlington's Nazi sympathies. Instead Stevens talks about trying "to make the best of what remains of my day." This may be no more than denial and evasion in Anthony Hopkins's performance, but there is more at work in the novel.

Mr. Stevens believes that he can sum up his life in the confession, "I gave my best to Lord Darlington." He hopes that his life makes a "small contribution to the creation of a better world." The Japanese term for this is *bushido*:

it required the samurai specifically to serve his lord
with the utmost loyalty and in general to put devotion
to moral principle (righteousness) ahead of personal
gain. The achievement of this high ideal involved
a life of austerity, temperance, constant
self-discipline. . . qualities long honored in the Japanese
feudal tradition. . . [and which were] given a systematic
form. . . in terms of Confucian ethical philosophy.

According to Ruth Benedict, whose 1946 book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* remains a classic starting point for the analysis of Japanese culture, "such strength [of character] is the most admired virtue in Japan." The purpose of Confucian ethics is to produce a person who exhibits grace and authority under any social circumstance. Confucian ethics are not eschatological. There is no Last Judgment nor transcendental authority to separate sheep from goats. As Hall and Ames explain: "The model [*chun tcu:* exemplary person] qualifies as model not on the basis of what he can do, but by virtue of the quality of his actions: how he does things."

In contrast to Confucian ethics, Zen Buddhism hopes to liberate a person from all (Confucian) social situations, which are inherently worrisome. In Zen Buddhism, writes T. P. Kasulis, one is enlightened "when one lets go of pre-conceived notions of the self." Such pre-conceptions are not Platonically innate but are derived from memorable performances of behavior evoked by specific social contexts or special occasions, which define tradition. In contrast, "The Zen ideal is to act spontaneously in the situation without first objectifying it in order to define one's role." Against this Japanese

Confucian/Buddhist tension, *The Remains of the Day* can be seen as a Buddhist critique of Confucianism. Mr. Stevens's life is stunted by the Confucian *bushido* code that he relies on to render identity and self-worth. The remedy is to develop a Zen Buddhist outlook which is characterized by a unique kind of comedy.

The contrast between Eastern and Western attitudes in regard to social roles provides a door into Kazuo Ishiguro's world. In the Western view, Stevens is pathetic because his obsession with duty has arrested the development of adult autonomy. Westerners believe that something like Erik Erikson's "Eight Stages of Man" specifies objective and universal stages of human, in contrast to cultural, development. Measured by this standard, Stevens fails to grow up; he follows a social role instead of becoming his own person. Exasperated when Stevens fails to drop the role of butler and does not romantically respond to her, Miss Kenton asks, "Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to pretend?" Stevens's ambitions remain oedipal: to please a father figure. Especially in the movie version, Stevens remains pathetically defensive until he tragically admits, "All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really□one has to ask oneself□what dignity is there in that?" Stevens poses this as a rhetorical question because every Westerner knows the answer: that one's deepest obligation is to develop a unique individuality. Christianity demands this. In *Sources of the Self* Charles Taylor illustrates that Romanticism/Modernism simply provided different arguments to insist on the same duty.

Nothing like this analysis can be made from a Confucian outlook. In Japan filial loyalty (*hsiao*)□ which is ultimately offered to the person of the Emperor (symbolized in this case by Lord Darlington) □provides the vocabulary for self-worth. Without this loyalty, which derives from a sense of gratitude and obligation (*gimu*: the infinite debt owed to parents for giving life and to the emperor for giving culture; *giri*: the debt owed to teachers, employers and other benefactors), one is no better than a monkey or a sociopath. Benedict explains that "the hero we [Westerners] sympathize with because he is in love or cherishes some personal ambition," the Japanese "condemn as weak because he has allowed these feelings" to erode his moral worth: "Westerners are likely to feel it is a sign of strength to rebel against conventions. . . . But the strong, according to Japanese verdict, are those who disregard personal happiness and fulfill their obligations. Strength of character, they think, is shown in conforming not in rebelling".

Since the time of the pre-Socratics, Western metaphysics has assumed the existence of some single underlying and presocial reality. Asian thought concedes that such a reality exists but has no confidence that reason can mirror it. Its sensitivity to the notion that reality is ultimately indiscernible and ineffable is revealed in self-consciousness about metaphor or the ways in which reality can be traced, in Derrida's sense of the term. For the Japanese, one would be a fool to die for the Truth like Socrates or Jesus. Believing that specific meaning and identity are conferred by social context, Asian concern focuses on adept shifts of identity in response to differing social situations. Hence Joseph Tobin reports that "the most crucial lesson to be learned in the Japanese preschool is not *omote*, not the ability to behave properly in formal situations, but instead *kejime*□the knowledge needed to shift fluidly back and forth between *omote* and

ura [literally "rear door," thus informal behavior]." Because Japanese are adept at making such shifts of identity, they generally do not feel compelled to make one choice among Shinto, Confucian and Buddhist outlooks. They unselfconsciously adopt the appropriate identity when social circumstances call for a choice. Using psychological terminology, Takie Sugiyama Lebra identifies four possible Japanese selves: presentational (Confucian), inner (Shinto), empathetic (Mahayana) and boundless (Buddhist).

These shifts between various identities are generally under social and personal control. In contrast, paradigm shifts are occasioned by historical forces, such as the shift from the feudal values of the isolated Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867) to the values of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which committed Japan to modernization. Edwin Reischauer has compared this shift to an earthquake: "The Tokugawa system had been shaken to its foundations by the events since 1853 [caused by an American naval presence and threats of colonization], and the whole antiquated structure began to disintegrate. All policies had become subject to debate by *samurai* from all over Japan." He explains that "the *samurai* in a brief nine year period were deprived of all their special privileges, and Japan was started on a great change which was to transform its society in a mere generation or two from one in which status was primarily determined by heredity to one in which it depended largely on the education and achievements of the individual." Benedict offers a more graphic picture: "The Tokugawas. . . regulated the details of each caste's daily behavior. Every family head had to post on his doorway his class position and the required facts about his hereditary status. The clothes he could wear, the foods he could buy, and the kind of house he could legally live in were regulated according to this inherited rank." In the thirty years that Reischauer mentions, all of this was erased and new scripts were written. Even the emperor had his photo taken in Prussian military regalia.

After less than a century's involvement with the Western outlook, the Japanese world exploded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like many Japanese novel's written after the war□one example is the brooding novel by Jiro Osaragi, *The Journey* (1960)□Ishiguro's first two novels are set in the mushroom shadow of the atomic bomb, which so dramatically ended the outlook provided by statemandated Shinto. One day it was Emperor Hirohito's portrait in every public building, the next it was Douglas MacArthur's picture in the newspaper. Overnight definitions of honor, dignity and status were redefined. In *A Pale View of Hills,* a retired teacher laments, "I devoted my life to the teaching of the young. And then I watched the Americans tear it all down." The same teacher lectures his son, already converted to the new outlook, "Discipline, loyalty, such things held Japan together once. That may sound fanciful, but it's true. People were bound by a sense of duty. Towards one's family, towards superiors, towards the country." Later the *sensei* (teacher) is lectured by one of his former students who bluntly tells him, "In your day, children in Japan were taught terrible things. They were taught lies of the most damaging kind. Worst of all, they were taught not to see, not to question. And that's why the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history." How can the teacher respond? Can he meekly admit that his entire world view was wrong, that his life was "spent in a misguided direction"? And what value system should he adopt to assess his putative failings? The contemporary *zeitgeist* of his

student, with its "self-evident" democratic values, simply did not exist in the old teacher's world. And who can say how long the current outlook will be fashionable? The teacher is too old to abandon his pre-war outlook; the younger man is too earnest to recognize how arbitrary his own outlook is. Yet millions of people in the 20th century have been caught trying to straddle the conflicting values of two worlds. Ishiguro offers us an example in the second plot of *A Pale View of Hills,* which tells a fragmentary tale of a ghost-like woman and her neglected daughter. The little girl does not attend school and is literally lost at various times in the novel. Her mother is equally lost, chasing an American serviceman in the hope of redemptive immigration to the America that destroyed Japan. Her equivocation and uncertainty are well illustrated by her inability to care for her daughter, who symbolizes the next generation. At one time she says, "I'm a mother, and my daughter's interests come first". At another time she sarcastically asks, "Do you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother to her?"

In addition to the possibilities of exclusively living in the old world or the new world, or equivocating between them, there is a fourth possibility suggested by Zen Buddhism, which recognizes that social roles work like dramatic roles to dictate action and identity, and that the concepts of analytic language simply write more scripts rather than naming pre-existing entities. Kasulis explains that "We go through life thinking that our words and ideas mirror what we experience, but repeatedly we discover that the distinctions taken to be true are merely mental constructs." Values are a matter of style, a way of seeing things. There is no ultimately true world of essential substances; in positing eternal ideas Plato was simply imagining, functioning as another artist. Human nature does not operate by following a set of formulas. The most we can know is how to act and who we are within concrete social boundaries. Who and what we are beyond these is an enigma, a subject for Zen *koans*, which state paradoxes that are used as a meditative focus for Zen training. "Show me your original face," a Master might demand of a disciple, thereby directing him to reflect on pre-social (nonConfucian) identity. How can this primal state be identified without recourse to an arbitrary social context? Here one must remark that language itself is such a context.

For most of *The Remains of the Day,* Stevens feels that his tragic and wasted life resulted from mistaken loyalty, so that if he had backed a different horse or had played different cards, he would have been a winner instead of a loser. Pondering this issue, Stevens writes: "Naturally, when one looks back to such instances today, they may indeed take the appearance of being crucial, precious moments in one's life; but of course, at the time, this was not the impression one had." Indeed, the very problem is that "There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable." Zen advises us to cease looking for such definitive and seminal moments because they are not there. These putative moments of choice are characteristic properties of analysis rather than objectively existent or discrete entities waiting to be discovered. The recognition that consciousness is a process like painting, rather than a mirror, can instantly dissolve trust in the analytic process. Suddenly the gestalt shifts from seeing the contents of consciousness to noticing the process itself. One can then develop an esthetic taste for this voyeuristic, detached perspective, which keeps one from too quickly professing another explanation, which promises to explain what was mistaken in the former view.

The Remains of the Day and *An Artist of the Floating World* are both rendered as diaries in which each diarist searches for (moral) points of judgment in his experience, which he thinks mistakenly committed him to a historically failed vision. The problem is that the diary, or any retrospective analysis, is an interpretation committed to some set of implicit values that the analysis will make explicit. Analysis is a performance which requires "causes" in order to produce "effects." For this reason, as Kasulis explains, "Zen Buddhism criticizes our ordinary, unenlightened existence by refusing to accept a retrospective reconstruction of reality" as uniquely or even especially true or definitive. Any expectation of discovering the "truth" or developing a transcendent identity in such terms is futile. People like Stevens, who cannot escape the deconstruction of beliefs they relied on to make sense of their experience□a world view they thought was objective and universal□have an opportunity for liberation, for not recommitting themselves to an alternative interpretation. In fact the Zen monastic experience is designed to force monks to just such a crisis.

It is Ichiro Ono, the artist in the novel *An Artist of the Floating World,* who, by virtue of a heightened sensitivity to Japanese esthetics□which were largely formulated by Zen Buddhism□is most aware of the possibility of floating rather than diving in hopes of getting to the bottom of things. As Ishiguro depicts him, Ono rose to prominence in the 1930s as a painter. He is enticed to direct his art towards the production of didactic propaganda by earnest men who tell him that as a leader of "the new generation of Japanese artists, you have a great responsibility towards the culture of this nation." They counsel Ono not to "hide away somewhere, perfecting pictures of courtesans", but to paint inspiring pictures of "stern-faced soldiers. . . pointing the way forward" to greatness. Under the American occupation of 1945, Ono admits that he had been "a man of some influence, who used that influence towards a disastrous end." What else could he say? Still, there is a disconcerting tone in Ono's contrition, which makes it sound insincere. He seems to disown too quickly his earlier commitment to the war effort and to equivocate in denouncing it, saying, "Indeed, I would be the first to admit that those same sentiments [expressed in didactic war art] are perhaps worthy of condemnation." Ono's motive is not to defend a choice. He considers any choice to be a consequence of a process. The (moral) problem is unconditional faith in the process: "All I can say is that at the time I acted in good faith. I believed in all sincerity I was achieving good for my fellow countrymen. But as you see, I am not now afraid to admit I was mistaken." People who earlier demanded that Ono support fascist values, now expect the same ardor in condemning those values. As an artist (Buddhist), Ono perceives that the performance is the same.

Art frustrates the wish to get to the bottom of things, to gain a clear and definitive picture of the way things really are. As a young artist, Ono was not ready to sacrifice his vanity, his confidence that as a man of discipline and technical mastery, he would get to the bottom of things. Even when he is middle-aged, basking in the glow of adulation from his students, he considers art a vehicle, something he can use to achieve aims which precede and remain unaffected by the vehicle. When he thinks that he has mastered enough of the instrument, Ono informs his teacher, "I have learnt much in contemplating the world of pleasure, and recognizing its fragile beauty." But he then demonstrates how little he has learned: "I now feel it is time for me to progress" because "artists must learn

BOOKRAGS

to value something more tangible than those pleasurable things that disappear with the morning light." The Zen roshi or teacher could tell him that perceiving and thinking are processes like painting a picture. We perceive how light and language connect things, paint things. We fleetingly possess the picture but never the objects.

For the essence of the Buddhist outlook is the recognition that everything, including the values to which we are so earnestly dedicated, is a temporary perceptual amalgam fused by language and emotion. The ground for the existence of things is temporal and as insubstantial as light. Yet, like Ono and Stevens, we become "attached to our characterizations, thinking of them as absolutes, rather than as names convenient for a given purpose." This includes our very identities, which are no more than cultural performances. Identity is a play of light and color, not something static; not a number nor an atom nor a soul. This Buddhist line of thinking gets to the bottom of things in its own way, and in Ishiguro's novel, Ono's teacher, Mori-san, tries to communicate something of this view to his pupil, telling Ono that "the finest, most fragile beauty an artist can hope to capture drifts within those pleasure houses after dark. And on nights like these, Ono, some of that beauty drifts into our own quarters here." The master then refers to some of his own early paintings, saying, "they don't even hint at these transitory, illusory qualities." If Ono were as discerning as the artist he aspires to be□and ironically claims to be□he would recognize this as Japanese politeness, as face-saving admonishment which avoids explicit formulation and consequent direct confrontation. Mori is suggesting that despite whatever technical mastery he achieved in his youth, he could not see with the profundity produced by a life-time of (Buddhist) dedication and practice. The point, he suggests, is for Ono not to think that he has finished the job of development, that he can see to the bottom of things and that consequently he no longer needs to strive for enlightenment. For enlightenment is also a process which needs to be repeatedly performed.

In Christianity, pride is a sin because God is everything and we are merely his creatures. In Buddhism, pride is embarrassing because it so flagrantly ignores elementary principles. In the Buddhist view, one cannot possess anything, including the self that craves possessions; everything dissolves and changes. In a Zen-like tradition of relating how his master enlightened him, Mori-san talks about "a man of no standing" (someone with no conferred authority). Ono complains, saying, "I am puzzled that we artists should be devoting so much of our time enjoying the company of those like Gisaburosan." Mori explains, "The best things, he always used to say, are put together of a night and vanish with the morning." The principle of change (*anicca*) is an axiom of Buddhism. You cannot hold on to nor control experience by retrospective interpretation, which always renders a substitute (sign) for the experience to produce propaganda. Interpretation discovers only what is latent in its own structure. It cannot get to the bottom of experience because interpretation always deals with the substitutes it paints. The artist controls only the illusion of light.

Like a Zen monk, Mori has spent much of his life trying to capture the oblique light of the floating world, which does not spotlight a specific moment or subject, like truth or dignity or even beauty, but rather encompasses all such particulars in a suffusive glow□just as the light of life similarly contains all specific moments, none of which transcends the

process. Explaining the eminent Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro's idea of satori (enlightenment), Robert Carter writes: "The deep self, which forever eludes our conceptual grasp, is yet somehow known, nevertheless, as that at the background of our experience. It is never known but is ever present as a background 'lining.'" Kasulis defines Zen enlightenment as "the direct recognition of what one most fundamentally is: the purity, unity, and responsiveness of prereflective experience." The Trappist monk and student of Buddhism, Thomas Merton, explains that "the chief characteristic of Zen is that it rejects all these systematic elaborations in order to get back, as far as possible, to the pure unarticulated and unexplained ground of direct experience. The direct experience of what? Life itself."

The intent of Buddhism is to achieve an esthetic appreciation
rather than to employ analysis in a search
for an illusory redemptive moment, a moment of
truth, moral choice and justification. In Ishiguro's
novel, Mori plays the part of a Zen Master, telling
Ono, his disciple:I was very young when I prepared those prints. I suspect
the reason I couldn't celebrate the floating world
was that I couldn't bring myself to believe in its
worth. Young men are often guilt-ridden about pleasure,
and I suppose I was no different. I suppose I
thought that to pass away one's time in such places,
to spend one's skills celebrating things so intangible
and transient, I suppose I thought it all rather wasteful,
all rather decadent. It's hard to appreciate the
beauty of a world when one doubts its very validity.

Surprisingly this intangible and transient world of perception is the only world we ever experience.

On the last page of the novel, Ono, now an old man, reflects, "when I remember those brightly-lit bars and all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing a little more boisterously perhaps than those young men yesterday, but with much the same good-heartedness, I feel a certain nostalgia for the past," but he then goes on to conclude: "one can only wish these young people well" today. Neither Mori nor Ono offer specific advice from theology that would force life to conform to some principle; nor do they offer advice about seizing an opportune or all important moment of decision that once lost results in tragedy. Their advice, which seems so empty to earnest young people, is to encourage them to be esthetically sensitive to the quality of light that illuminates life; to appreciate life itself. In 1949 Ono's son-in-law parrots the same rhetoric Ono heard in the thirties, which was the same rhetoric Ono's grandfather might have heard in the early days of the Meiji restoration: "We needed new leaders with a new approach appropriate to the world of today." The truth is that the light of the lamps and laughter of the people beneath them and the political ardor of Ono's son-inlaw are no different now than they ever were; nor will they ever be fundamentally different in the future. There is nothing to find or repudiate in the past; neither is there anything to prove or create in the future. Life is not□except in Christian/Islamic interpretation□moving toward some

eschatological moment. A *koan* has it that "When an ordinary man attains knowledge he is a sage; when a sage attains understanding he is an ordinary man."

Mr. Stevens is interested in extraordinary men. As a kind of Victorian *samurai*, his life is dedicated to the great or at least the powerful. A life of devotion requires a worthy object, a fixed point. Thus Stevens confesses that in his youth "we tended to concern ourselves much more with the moral status of an employer." Sounding like the youthful Ono, Stevens acknowledges that "we were ambitious. . . to serve gentlemen who were, so to speak, furthering the progress of humanity." Stevens speaks not only for himself and the servant class, but for everyone in the empire when he says, "professional prestige lay most significantly in the moral worth of one's employer." Extraordinary people were the measure of empire. No less than the fascist regimes of the 20th century, European aristocracies of early centuries were dedicated to providing an environment for superior people. Thus Lord Darlington's Nazi sympathies are no quirk, and Stevens could have comfortably worn a Nazi uniform.

Stevens is proud to be near the hub of the wheel of empire, where "debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country." Initially Stevens is exclusively concerned with *samurai* values. Someone else chooses the game; the butler is content to be a skilled player: "my vocation will not be fulfilled until I have done all I can to see his lordship through the great tasks he has set himself." In 1923 Stevens witnesses a confrontation between his employer and an American Senator, Mr. Lewis, who calls Lord Darlington a fool: "He [Darlington] is an amateur and international affairs today are no longer for gentlemen amateurs. The sooner you here in Europe realize that the better." When Darlington rises with icy civility to correct Lewis "What you describe as 'amateurism', sir, is what I think most of us here still prefer to call 'honour'" Stevens heartily approves. Yet Lewis proves to be correct: good intentions are not enough to create a just world. Reginald Cardinal, tragically killed in WWII, represents British hopes for the postempire period. In touch with modern politics, he is less crass than the American senator and might be characterized as a young John Majors. His observation on Darlington is discomfiting: "Over the last few years, his lordship has probably been the single most useful pawn Herr Hitler has had in this country for his propaganda tricks. All the better because he's sincere and honourable and doesn't recognize the true nature of what he's doing." Stevens has himself, if only silently, objected to Darlington's sycophantic behavior towards Hitler's foreign minister, Ribbentrop.

Stevens's loyalty to a single view exhibits a hair-line crack when he is involved in what he would like to dismiss as lower-class political wrangling in a village where he is stranded for a night. A garrulous barroom character expresses the opinion that "Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get." Stevens tries to deny this, since it strikes at the foundation of aristocratic, fascist and Confucian claims to possess exclusive authority to set the rules for social games. For example, if each individual could freely decide how to be religious, what authority would the pope retain? Stevens asks, "how can ordinary people truly be expected to have 'strong opinions' on all manner of things?" He has, however, discovered that Darlington and his cronies are as uninformed as the villagers

or any other "amateurs" and that their "strong opinions" are nothing more than the gullible fantasies of childhood redefined in Nazi propaganda. Calling someone like Darlington "lord" or the housemaids "Jews" does not denote some inherent property; it simply assigns a position in a social game. Not to have realized this, especially since he was himself such a skilled player□this is Stevens's mistake from a Buddhist perspective.

Although it might appear that the end of the novel leaves Stevens a wreck, regretfully cynical of his misplaced trust, this is not the case. Stevens talks about hoping "to make the best of what remains of my day," in a tone that is not glum. Once again Ono provides instructive insight when in the earlier novel he says, "it is one of the enjoyments of retirement that you are able to drift through the day at your own pace, easy in the knowledge that you have put hard work and achievement behind you." In retirement one is a person of no standing and hence no anxiety. Having no assigned part to play, one has no fear of giving a bad performance. In retiring from the world, as do Buddhist monks, there is an invitation to see life as art, as a performance rather than as a Zoroastrian battle. A Westerner might argue that even Zen Buddhist monks play some social role and that Stevens remains employed. Yet consider what is wanted from Stevens by Mr. Farraday, a rich American who employs him after Darlington's demise: he wants a purely dramatic performance. Farraday is amused by Stevens, until one day when Stevens fails to offer the performance that is expected of him for one of Mr. Farraday's American guests by denying that he was Lord Darlington's butler. At least in part, Stevens's motive is obvious: he did not want to exhibit his part in the pretension and gullibility of drafting policies of appeasement to Hitler. The guest lets Mr. Farraday know that she thinks the house and butler are imitations. Farraday is not amused when he inquires, "I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you?". Farraday bought the house because it was a theatrical museum. Stevens is employed as the star actor in this small theme park. What angers Farraday is the quality of performance. Because Stevens's performance failed to entertain the audience, Farraday is disappointed in the way a producer would be disappointed in a stage play flop. The sole concern is esthetic. Death camps and atomic bombs do not threaten.

At the end of *The Remains of the Day,* two features offer opportunities to reconsider the entire novel and to see it as something more than a *tour de force* of style. First, we might note that the final image is almost the same as that in *An Artist of the Floating World.* In the earlier novel the final image is of "all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing." In *The Remains of the Day* we find Stevens waiting for pier lights to come on, and when they do he studies "more closely these throngs of people laughing and chatting," discovering that "evidently, they had all paused a moment for the lights coming on." This is a moment of *zazen*, of disengagement from unreflective life preoccupied with details, of noticing the light instead of the objects it illuminates. Consider next how Stevens continues: "As I watch them now, they are laughing together merrily. It is curious how people can build such warmth among themselves so swiftly. It is possible these particular persons are simply united by the anticipation of the evening ahead. But, then, I rather fancy it has more to do with this skill of bantering. Listening to

them now, I can hear them exchanging one bantering remark after another." The topic of "bantering" provides the second opportunity to reconsider the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the banter of Mr. Farraday seemed a nuisance to Stevens and seemed perhaps to provide a source of humor to readers. In either case it did not seem especially significant. How astonishing, then, to discover the centrality of bantering in Zen Buddhism and accordingly to recognize that it functions in the novel as a kind of Zen practice which liberates Stevens from his *samurai* role.

There are two schools of Zen Buddhism: Soto and Rinzai. Both rely on *zazen* (seated meditation) to produce enlightenment. Rinzai Masters additionally assign *koan* study to their disciples. Meditation temporarily suspends all social roles except that of *zazen,* which Zen Buddhism claims is not really a social role but the natural human condition, our "original face." *Koans* present the student with culturally insoluble problems in order to erode confidence in the assumption that Confucianism has delineated the rules for every game that can be played and in order to question the assumption that analysis can get to the bottom of things. Many Westerners are familiar with the *koan* which asks, "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" Yet what may be misleading in this popular example is that *koans* are not mildly entertaining enigmas. *Koan* study constitutes a formal and intense dialogue (another Confucian game) between a student and his *roshi* (Zen Master). When the Master demands, "Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, just this moment, what is your original face before your mother and father were born?" he wants an answer. Alan Watts quotes a Zen master's description of *koan* work: the enigma causes a "'feeling of uneasiness and impatience'. After a while this feeling becomes intensified, and the *Koan* seems so overwhelming and impenetrable that the disciple is likened to a mosquito trying to bite a lump of iron." The famous Chinese scholar, Wingtsit Chan, adds: "Literally *koan* means an official document on the desk, connoting a sense of important decisions and the final determination of truth and falsehood." The inability to provide the right answer□like the inability of Stevens to find the key moment on which his life pivots, imagining that he could have turned it in the right direction by giving the correct response □creates great anxiety for a Japanese schooled in Confucian etiquette. To the same effect, Kasulis recounts the story of an exasperated Buddhist monk who tried to turn the tables by asking his master, "What [sort of thing] is this person of no status?" The *roshi* came down from his dais like a thunderstorm. Seizing the student, "Rinzai exclaimed, 'Speak! Speak!'" When the monk hesitated, not knowing how he was expected to respond in this situation, "Rinzai released him," saying of the student, here is "the true person of no status, what a dried-up s□stick he is." He then left the monks to ponder the double entendre hinged between Buddhist and Confucian expectations about how the monk should have acted. Kasulis explains that "while the secular person must have a presupposed status in order to act, the Zen Buddhist is, in Rinzai's words, a person of no status." He has no social situation or stage on which to act, no script to follow, and yet there is an insistent demand to perform. Yes, but which part? The answer is no part, show me your original face: "the Zen ideal is to act spontaneously in the situation without first objectifying it in order to define one's role"; that is, the "message" of Zen is simply to live instead of first studying how to live as specified by Confucian texts.

In a less intense way, the bantering in *The Remains of the Day* produces an effect similar to *koan* study in *zazen.* Bantering will accept neither habitual nor conventional response. In laughing at the proffered response, it forces one to consider how one has acted□from a point of view without rules. On this point Faure says that "There may be a type of sudden awakening that, like humor, totally subverts all. . . categories (and as such is not itself a category)." In this context, we might note that very early in the novel Stevens confesses that "bantering on my new employer's part has characterized much of our relationship over these months." Like a Zen monk challenged to respond to a *koan* assigned to him by his master, Stevens tells us that he "would smile in the correct manner whenever I detected the bantering tone in his voice. Nevertheless, I could never be sure exactly what was required of me on these occasions." Zen monks also compiled lists of *koans*□one might almost call them jokes□and their "answers" in a work called the Mumonkan. Stevens sounds very much like a Zen monk when he puzzles, "how would one know for sure that at any given moment a response of the bantering sort is truly what is expected?" What one needs to appreciate here is Steven's Japanese heritage, wherein a *roshi* requires as much respect as an English lord. Thus Stevens worries, "One need hardly dwell on the catastrophic possibility of uttering a bantering remark only to discover it wholly inappropriate." He experiments with timid and studied witticisms, but admits, "I cannot escape the feeling that Mr Farraday is not satisfied with my responses to his various banterings."

The problem in regard to enlightenment is that the Zen Buddhist monk typically relates to his *roshi* in a manner specified by Confucian ethics, the system that seems coterminous with Japanese culture. In Japanese culture, the whole point of Confucian ethics is security: to provide safety from embarrassment by meticulously following etiquette. Benedict explains that the Japanese tend to "stake everything on ruling their lives like pedants and are deeply fearful of any spontaneous encounter with life". Zen Buddhism provides alterity. It is a crazy "system"□Faure calls it "ritual antiritualism"□ dedicated to destroying, or at least suspending, the mediating system of Confucian ethics, which Zen Buddhism claims alienates one from direct experience. Consequently the *roshi* often employs crazywisdom to violate Confucian expectations. The *roshi* may slap the student or denigrate conventional Buddhist piety or do something strange. For example, the Mumonkan tells this shocking story. Some monks are quarreling about a cat when Nansen, their *roshi*, intrudes, saying, "if you can say a word of Zen, I will spare the cat." Not knowing what they are expected to say, the monks are silent and the roshi kills the cat, violating ethical principles about nonviolence and compassion. Imagine the shock among non-Buddhists as well as Buddhists, if the Dalai Lama were filmed today chopping a pet cat in two. The monks must fear that their master had gone crazy. What would they expect when Nansen reports the incident to Joshu, an even greater Zen master? They would expect Joshu to upbraid Nansen, perhaps to expel him from the monastery and proclaim that he is no Buddhist. Instead Joshu "took off his sandal, put it on his head, and walked off"! Nansen then remarked, "If you had been there, I could have saved the cat!". In a formal interview the *roshi* asks his disciple, "what is the meaning of Joshu's putting his shoe on his head?" The Buddhist monk is likely to be as perplexed as Mr. Stevens is by Mr. Farraday's bantering.

The problem with rules and scripts is that they cannot take the measure of life. Even if the code is perfectly, rather than shabbily, enacted, it produces mandarins instead of Buddhas. The perfect Nazi is still a thug. Stevens's father provides an additional illustration. In his seventies, at the end of a life of distinguished service, Stevens's father has always been a paragon of *bushido*, of *samurai* discipline and loyalty. Stevens is shocked when Miss Kenton, at the time a newcomer to the estate, sees in the old man nothing more than an under-butler. Stevens remarks, "I am surprised your powers of observation have not already made it clear to you that he is in reality more than that. A great deal more." Consider Mr. Stevens senior as his son finds him early one morning near the end of his life. Is he a man to be emulated? Stevens offers us the portrait of an old monk living in a "prison cell" garret at the top of the house, as though at the summit of a mountain. Although it is still dark, the old mandarin "was sitting, shaved and in full uniform" waiting for the dawn. Clearly the model of monastic discipline, he admonishes his son, "'I've been up for the past three hours,' he said, looking me up and down rather coldly." The old man also glanced "disapprovingly at the lamp I had brought to guide me up the rickety staircase." Stevens reports that "the oil lamp beside his bed had been extinguished." We have already become aware of the significance of this symbol from the suffusive lamp-light in *An Artist of the Floating World* and the lights of the pier at the end of *The Remains of the Day.* There is also Gautama Buddha's dying injunction that every Buddhist knows: "be ye lamps unto yourselves." Gautama clarified at least part of his metaphor by ironically admonishing his followers, "Look not for refuge [or light] to any one besides yourselves." Clearly the light has gone out on top of this mountain.

After the death of his father and the death and disgrace of Lord Darlington, Stevens is left with the frail reed of bantering as a discipline. He has no choice in this. Stevens admits that he was part of a "package" deal. He went with the house when the American bought it and Mr. Farraday chooses to confront Stevens with banter. Consequently, Stevens feels forced to devote "some time and effort over recent months to improving my skill in this very area." As though he were talking of *koan* study in *zazen*, Stevens says, "I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at least once a day; whenever an odd moment presents itself, I attempt to formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment." We smile at the oxymoron of such a resolute study of humor, but there is something serious to note in Ishiguro's use of Zen bantering. For if one is to avoid the end of Stevens's father, the sterility of mere discipline —or worse, avoid following Darlington to Auschwitz—one can perhaps only do so by laughing: laughing at the roles others are playing, not because they are badly performing their parts, but for the opposite reason, precisely because in playing their parts so determinedly they strike us as false, as performances which are forced, followed by rote. Above all, such performances are grim and joyless. One believes, not that these people are conscious fakes or interested in manipulating others, but that they are deluded and ignorant of their own identity apart from the scripts they desperately follow. Instead of living they are acting. Then one sees this about one's self. And suddenly the role of *samurai* or butler or even monk is transformed from a matter of humorless and grim discipline into a performance, a dance. The axis shifts from counting the minute details of duty to appreciating an esthetic performance. Life is not confined in a number of Confucian games. As many Japanese descriptions of

enlightenment have it, the bottom of the bucket suddenly falls out and all the water of good karma or dutiful Confucian action is lost.

In this way and that I tried to save the old pail Since
the bamboo strip was weakening and about to break
Until at last the bottom fell out. No more water in
the pail! No more moon in the water!

One does not need to see the "moon in the water" or one's life rationalized in a diary, if one is in contact with the living moment. Can you see the moon? Do you have a life? The *roshi* laughs at the anxiety that turns life into a diary of moral calculation.

Certainly Stevens is no Buddha at the end of the novel. Yet neither is he like Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, who writes, "I have no idea how I shall usefully fill the remainder of my life," which "stretches out as an emptiness before me." It is true that Stevens is still evasive in regard to realizing how profoundly his code betrayed him: how he could have easily worn a Nazi uniform under slightly different conditions, and consequently how it is reliance on absolute moral systems, which defend the ego, that is the problem in a Buddhist view. Consider that if he had been on the "right" side, Mr. Stevens would not have been a success. He merely would have been a mandarin as smug as his father and Lord Darlington. Reginald Cardinal prompts Stevens to recognize something like this when he asks if Stevens is curious about Darlington's involvement with Ribbentrop: "Tell me, Stevens, don't you care at all? Aren't you curious?" He presses, "You just let all this go on before you and your never think to look at it for what it is." Stevens continues to play his *samurai* part, ironically imagining that his "father might have been proud of" the stance he takes to bar Reginald from barging into Lord Darlington's meeting at the very moment when "his lordship's good name was destroyed for ever." Equally painful, Stevens also stands watch, with "an ever-growing conviction mounting" that "Miss Kenton was at that moment crying," because his script of butler/*samurai* says nothing about how to act in the circumstance of proffered love. Years later he confesses that "at that moment, my heart was breaking."

Regrettable as these incidences are, Stevens cannot redeem them. At best, he can see that such moments of crisis and loss were there in the scripts he was following. The way to avoid such waste and tragedy is not through redoubled dedication and discipline, but paradoxically, less. The *roshi* might ask if, at the time, Stevens truly felt compelled to act as he did in those two crises? If so, then why does he feel guilt-ridden, imagining later that he could have acted otherwise than the script dictated? At this point a Westerner poignantly feels the antagonism between the unique self, dedicated to principles through individual decisions, and a social role, which seems so much more superficial. This is not the case in Japan. Benedict reports that "Unforeseen situations which cannot be handled by rote are frightening" to Japanese precisely because moral principles, as such, are not available in their experience. Benedict turns this around somewhat, explaining "that they have been brought up to trust in a security which depends on others' recognition of the nuances of their observance of a code. When foreigners [or a Zen master] are oblivious of all these proprieties, the Japanese are at a loss. They cast

about to find similar meticulous proprieties according to which Westerners live and when they do not find them, some speak. . . of how frightened they are."

Zen would regard the regret that Mr. Stevens feels as a sophisticated way of clinging to the ego. It is a way to inflate the ego into a transcendental state, making it somewhat like the ego of the Christian or Muslim at the Last Judgment when the individual considers all the moments of moral decision, which, being chosen, constituted what the person became. The paradox of imagining alternative lives arises because there is a notion of the self as existing prior to, and in some way remaining unaffected by, the experiences which define the self. The problem comes from an unacknowledged shift or dualism between the self as the product of experience and the self as a transcendental agent that chooses which experiences to have. Buddhism considers this second self to be an illusory product of theology or retrospection. As Stevens discovers, one does not know until one has experienced. There is only one temporal track.

In closing his diary, Stevens feels that "Perhaps it is indeed time I began to look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically. After all, when one thinks about it, it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth." In teasing and bantering we disallow a conventional response, a reply merely in character. It is something very close to the *roshi* who continually teases, "come on, show me your original face, not your butler's face or some other mask, show me your face." Stevens admits, "I have of course already devoted much time to developing my bantering skills, but it is possible I have never previously approached the task with the commitment I might have done." We cannot predict that Stevens will become someone different than the Confucian mandarin, that he will become archly sensitive to multiple and detailed disciplines. But we can say that there is a better chance of liberation under the bantering tutelage of Mr. Farraday than under the grim discipline of his father or Lord Darlington. Perhaps Mr. Stevens is further on the way in this regard than we think. In his last sentence, Stevens says that he hopes to "be in a position to pleasantly surprise" his *roshi*, Mr. Farraday. Perhaps he has already surprised us. Is his diary as flat and ironically unselfconscious and morally didactic as we think, or is it in some degree a witticism, which puts the reader in an analogous position to Mr. Stevens *vis-à-vis* Mr. Farraday?

Heinrich Dumoulin illustrates that as an ideology, in contrast to ritual, Zen Buddhism is largely defined by a tradition of crazy-wisdom, paradox and bizarre teaching methods. For example, Hui-neng, who "is regarded, next to Bodhidharma, as the second and actual founder" of the Zen sect of Buddhism, is depicted as an illiterate (possibly retarded) rice-pounder doing menial kitchen work before being elevated to leadership of the entire sect. Finally, we need to remember that Kazuo Ishiguro is the master who has given us the *koan* of Mr. Stevens to study. The reward is insight into the Japanese and Buddhism that supersedes abstract scholarly studies and illuminates a great novel that otherwise may remain closed to most readers. If this explication is convincing in revealing the theme of *The Remains of the Day,* it should also serve to illustrate an appropriate critical technique for the analysis of many Commonwealth and postcolonial novels: using comparative religion and philosophy to provide key terms and concepts to comprehend non-Western identity, motive and values.

BOOKRAGS

Source: John Rothfork, "Zen Comedy in Postcolonial Literature: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day,*" in *Mosaic,* Vol. 29, No. 1, March 1996, pp. 79-102.

Adaptations

The Remains of the Day was adapted to audio by Random House in 1990 with British actor Michael York as reader.

In 1993, the novel was adapted to film by Columbia Pictures. Directed by James Ivory, this film starred Anthony Hopkins as Stevens and Emma Thompson as Miss Kenton. It earned numerous prestigious awards and nominations from all over the world, including the American Academy Awards, British Academy Awards, and Golden Globe awards. Hopkins and Thompson won David di Donatello Awards for their performances.

Topics for Further Study

Imagine that the system of house servants described in *The Remains of the Day* exists today in the United States. Given the cultural differences, consider how the employer/employee relationship would be different and how duties would be defined differently. Prepare an orientation packet for a new butler as if you are an experienced butler.

Lord Darlington was passionate about the political and economic changes he witnessed after World War I, so he organized an unofficial summit meeting. What wrongs do you feel need to be addressed in the world today? Plan an unofficial summit meeting of your own, complete with guest list, agenda, goals, and social events.

The story takes place in July 1956, the same month and year as the Suez Crisis. Why do you think Ishiguro chose this particular time for his novel? Write a well-developed essay explaining your interpretation of the importance of the Suez Crisis to the novel.

The novel portrays the decline of the aristocracy and of the practice of keeping a large staff of house servants on English estates. Research the tradition of the English house staff, along with the factors that brought about its decline. Create a presentation to share your findings with a middle school history class.

Compare and Contrast

1920s: Aristocrats often have extensive family estates in which they live and employ a large staff of house servants, such as butlers, housekeepers, gardeners, cooks, and nannies. Wealth and status are the currencies in the competition to employ the very best servants in England.

1950s: The tradition of the house staff is waning. Some aristocrats and wealthy foreigners with homes in England keep a modest house staff.

Today: The tradition of the house staff is a luxury of the past, with the exception of the very wealthy and royalty. People's lifestyles have changed, and they take advantage of modern conveniences that make keeping up a household easier to do with less domestic help. Housecleaners and gardeners are more likely to work for several different employers and to live in their own homes.

1920s: The experience of World War I has made England eager to avoid another war on that scale. As a result, England is a leader in the League of Nations and in disarmament conferences whose mission is to maintain world peace. Still, many English people feel sympathetic toward Germany because of the harsh treatment it received at the 1919 peace conference. As political forces in Europe begin to polarize, many English men and women take Germany's side.

1950s: In the aftermath of World War II, public sentiment is decidedly against Germany. During the war, England fought with the Allies against Germany and the other Axis powers. As the truth about German concentration camps spreads, people are even less sympathetic to the defeated Nazis.

Today: English politics are more centered on domestic affairs than on international issues. Although England participates in international organizations such as the United Nations, the country's government is primarily focused on issues such as taxes, federal spending, health care, crime, and immigration.

1920s: For vacations within Great Britain, people rely primarily on automobiles to take them where they want to go.

1950s: Many people in Britain take advantage of comfortable passenger trains that take them to vacation destinations. While many people still enjoy a car trip through the country, others prefer to shorten their travel time by taking the trains so that they can enjoy more time at their destinations.

Today: English men and women continue to use the train system for vacation travel, although many prefer to greatly shorten their travel time by booking an airplane flight. As in the United States, air travel is often an affordable option.

What Do I Read Next?

Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990 (1997) is the work of P. F. Clarke and Mark Kishlansky, whose contribution to the Penguin History of Britain Series provides an overview of modern British history. Besides providing students with a better understanding of the events leading up to both world wars (and their aftereffects), this book provides commentary on religious, social, and intellectual changes over the past century.

Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* (1989) concerns Masuji Ono, an artist who becomes a propagandist during World War II and later witnesses the dramatic changes in his country after the war. This novel complements *The Remains of the Day* because it offers readers an in-depth look at Japan during the postwar era.

Mike Petry's 1999 *Narratives of Memory and Identity: The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* presents detailed analyses and comparisons of Ishiguro's first four novels. Petry also places Ishiguro's novels within the context of contemporary British literature.

P. G. Wodehouse's *Life with Jeeves: The Inimitable Jeeves, Very Good, Jeeves!, and Right Ho, Jeeves* (1983) contains three novels about the comic fictional character of Jeeves, the butler of Bertie Wooster. Wodehouse's novels about Jeeves, written in the early part of the 1900s, follow Wooster and his butler through various humorous incidents.

Kazuo Ishiguro (Writers and Their Work) (2001) by Cynthia Wong is an authoritative overview of the author's background in Japan and England and his ensuing career as an acclaimed author. Because this is the most recent treatment of Ishiguro's career to-date, it includes updated information.

Further Study

Cannadine, David, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* Vintage Books, 1999.

Cannadine explores the many complex reasons that the British aristocracy went from being an elite group of wealthy landowners to a dwindling class of people who lost their sons in World War I along with their power and status. To give dimension to his explanations, Cannadine includes letters, statistics, and historical accounts in his social history.

Ishiguro, Kazuo, *When We Were Orphans,* Knopf, 2000.

Considered one of Ishiguro's most complex and accomplished novels, this is the story of nine-year-old Christopher, whose parents disappear from their Shanghai home. He is sent to live in England, and when he is older, he returns to his home to uncover his family's mystery.

Shaffer, Brian W., *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro,* Random House, 1998.

Part of the *Understanding Contemporary British Literature* series, this book explores the life and career of Ishiguro. Shaffer comments on Ishiguro's use of setting, psychology, and first-person narration as he analyzes the profound influence of the author's dual heritage.

Vorda, Allan, and Kim Herzinger, "Stuck on the Margins: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro," in *Face to Face: Interviews with Contemporary Novelists,* Rice University Press, 1993, pp. 1-35.

In this interview, Ishiguro discusses Japanese and British cultures and how they have (and have not) influenced his writing. He also addresses how perceptions of him as a British-Japanese writer have affected his career in England.

BOOKRAGS

Bibliography

Annan, Gabriele, "On the High Wire," in *New York Review of Books,* Vol. 36, No. 19, December 7, 1989, pp. 3-4.

Coates, Joseph, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *Chicago Tribune,* October 1, 1989, p. 5.

Dyer, Geoff, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *New Statesman,* May 26, 1989.

Graver, Lawrence, "What the Butler Saw," in *New York Times Book Review,* October 8, 1989, p. 3.

Gurewich, David, "Upstairs, Downstairs," in *New Criterion,* Vol. 8, No. 4, December 1989, pp. 77-80.

Hassan, Ihab, "An Extravagant Reticence," in *World and I,* Vol. 5, No. 2, February 1990, pp. 369-74.

Kakutani, Michiko, "Books of the Times; An Era Revealed in a Perfect Butler's Imperfections," in *New York Times,* September 22, 1989, p. 33.

Lee, Hermione, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *New Republic,* Vol. 202, No. 4, January 22, 1990, pp. 36-39.

Mesher, D., "Kazuo Ishiguro," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Volume 194: *British Novelists Since 1960,* The Gale Group, 1998, pp. 145-53.

Rubin, Merle, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *Christian Science Monitor,* November 30, 1989, p. 13.

Rushdie, Salman, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *Observer,* May 21, 1989, p. 53.

Strawson, Galen, Review of *The Remains of the Day,* in *Times Literary Supplement,* May 19, 1989.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

©1997-2002; ©2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Gale and Design® and Thomson Learning™ are trademarks used herein under license.

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any

form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from this product, submit your request via Web at http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

Permissions Department
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

Permissions Hotline:
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, ext. 8006
Fax: 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, The Gale Group, Inc. does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. The Gale Group, Inc. accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

BOOKRAGS

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535