

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (novel excerpt)

This dystopian novel is set in England in the late 1990s, where clones are bred to be organ donors until their final donation, the 'completion', in which they must die. Kathy and Tommy, two clones in their early twenties, have heard rumours that it is possible to put off the final donation for several years if they can prove that they are truly in love with each other. They want to apply for this deferral and turn to Miss Emily, the former head teacher of Hailsham, the boarding school where they both grew up. Miss Emily replies:

'You must try and see it historically. After the war, in the early fifties, when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly, there wasn't time to take stock, to ask sensible questions. Suddenly there were all these new possibilities laid before us, all these ways to cure so many previously incurable conditions. This was what we noticed the most, wanted the most. And for a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum. Yes, there were arguments. But by the time people became concerned about ... about students, by the time they came to consider just how you were reared, whether you should have been brought into existence at all, well by then it was too late. There was no way to reverse the process. How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. And that was how things stood until our little movement came along. But do you see what we were up against? We were virtually attempting to square the circle. Here was the world, requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human. Well, we fought that battle for many years, and what we won for you, at least, were many improvements, though of course, you were only a select few. But then came the Morningdale scandal, then other things, and before we knew it, the climate had quite changed. No one wanted to be seen supporting us any more, and our little movement, Hailsham, Glenmorgan, the Saunders Trust, we were all of us swept away.'

'What was this Morningdale scandal you keep mentioning, Miss Emily?' I asked. 'You'll have to tell us because we don't know about it.'

'Well. I suppose there's no reason why you should. It was never such a large matter in the wider world. It concerned a scientist called James Morningdale, quite talented in his way. He carried on his work in a remote part of Scotland, where I suppose he thought he'd attract less attention. What he wanted was to offer people the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics. Superior intelligence, superior athleticism, that sort of thing. Of course, there'd been others with similar ambitions, but this Morningdale fellow, he'd taken his research much further than anyone before him, far beyond legal boundaries. Well, he was discovered, they put an end to his work and that seemed to be that. Except, of course, it wasn't, not for us. As I say, it never became an enormous matter. But it did create a certain atmosphere, you see. It reminded people, reminded them of a fear they'd always had. It's one thing to create students, such as yourselves, for the donation programme. But a generation of created children who'd take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people. They recoiled from that.'

'But Miss Emily', I said, 'what did any of that have to do with us? Why did Hailsham have to close because of something like that?'

'We didn't see an obvious connection either, Kathy. Not at first. [...] I suppose when it comes down to it, the central flaw was this. Our little movement, we were always too fragile, always too dependent on the whims of our supporters. So long as the climate was in our favour, so long as a corporation or a politician could see a benefit in supporting us, then, we were able to keep afloat. But it has always been a struggle, and after Morningdale, after the climate changed, we had no chance. The world didn't want to be reminded how the donation programme really worked. They didn't want to think about you students, or about the conditions you were brought up in. In other words, my dears, they wanted you back in the shadows.'

(765 words)

Annotations

- line 4:** **to take stock** – to stop and reflect carefully about the state of things
- line 13:** **to rear** – to raise (children) or to breed (animals)
- line 23:** **motor neurone disease** – neurological disorder that affects those cells which control voluntary muscle activity
- line 41:** **Glenmorgan, the Saunders Trust** – names of institutions where clones were raised
- line 44:** **I – here:** Kathy, she is the narrator
- line 70:** **to recoil (from)** – to react to a situation or idea with strong dislike or fear

Tasks

1 Content/Comprehension

- a) Summarise the scientific developments presented in the novel excerpt.
- b) Outline how the relationship between 'normal' society and the clones developed.

2 Form/Analysis

- a) Examine Miss Emily's argumentative techniques and her use of language and explain what they reveal about her attitude towards the clones.
- b) Explain the effect this excerpt has on the reader.

3 Comment/Text production

Choose one of the following tasks:

- a) Write an interior monologue to illustrate what is going on in Miss Emily's mind. Make sure it is in line with what you have found out about her in the analysis section.
- b) Using your knowledge of genetic engineering and artificial intelligence, comment on the attitude towards clones and cloning presented in this excerpt.

Ishiguro-Bestsellerverfilmung: Ich spende, also sterbe ich

Filmkritik des Films „Alles, was wir geben mussten“ (GB/USA 2011, Originaltitel: Never Let Me Go)

<p>[...] „Never Let Me Go“ – oder, entsprechend des deutschen Buchtitels, „Alles, was wir geben mussten“ – ist einer der erschütterndsten, tieftraurigsten und zugleich betörendsten Filme dieses Jahres.</p> <p>5 Am Anfang steht eine schlichte Texttafel, die von einem medizinischen Durchbruch im Jahr 1952 kündigt. Seitdem seien Krankheit und Siechtum praktisch verschwunden, und die durchschnittliche Lebenserwartung übertreffe 100 Jahre. Der Film</p> <p>10 übernimmt im folgenden die Struktur der in drei Hauptkapitel unterteilten Vorlage, sowie die Erzählperspektive der Protagonistin Kathy H. (Carey Mulligan). Die blickt im Alter von 28 Jahren zurück auf ihr bisheriges Leben, beginnend mit ihrer Kindheit in</p> <p>15 Hailsham, einer idyllisch gelegenen Internatschule im Großbritannien der ausgehenden Siebziger. [...]</p> <p>In das Bild vom pittoresken Waisenhaus mit seinen grünen Gärten und Enid-Blyton-Charme schleichen sich jedoch bald irritierende Fehler. So tragen alle</p> <p>20 Kinder elektronische Armbänder, mit denen sie sich beim Verlassen und Betreten des Gebäudes an Scannern registrieren. Zudem dürfen die Schüler nicht das Gelände verlassen, was sie sich angesichts kursierender Gruselgeschichten über die Welt hinter dem Zaun auch gar nicht trauen würden.</p> <p>25 Leser des Buchs wissen längst um die Gründe hierfür. Und auch über den Film kann man nicht ohne Erwähnung der verstörenden Prämisse von Ishiguros Roman sprechen. Ihre frühe Enthüllung durch die</p> <p>30 emphatische Lehrerin Miss Lucy (Sally Hawkins) nimmt der weiteren Erzählung auch nichts von ihrer Wucht: Die Kinder von Hailsham sind anonym</p>	<p>erzeugte Klone, erschaffen, um im Erwachsenenalter ihre Organe zu spenden. Die Gesellschaft betrachtet sie als Eigentum und</p> <p>35 letztlich rechtloses Humanmaterial; im Regelfall versterben Spender vor ihrem dreißigsten Lebensjahr im Zuge der dritten oder vierten Transplantation. [...]</p> <p>Die Würde, die eine subtil skizzierte</p> <p>40 Maschinerie des alltäglichen Genozids den Klonen versagt, gibt der Film seinen Figuren durch die behutsame Inszenierung zurück. Das bewegende Spiel der Hauptdarsteller, voran Carey Mulligan und Andrew Garfield, verdeutlicht</p> <p>45 dabei die perfide Logik eines hermetischen Systems, das die Bedingungen des Menschseins nach Belieben definiert. So ist die größte Grausamkeit, die Kathy, Tommy und Ruth widerfährt, die vermeintlich humane</p> <p>50 Konditionierung von Kindesbeinen an: Sie haben kein Bewusstsein für das Unrecht, das ihnen fortwährend angetan wird.</p> <p>Umso mehr zerreißen ihre schüchternen</p> <p>55 Versuche der Selbstwerdung, ihr Ringen mit Liebe, Eifersucht und Wut das Herz des Betrachters. Falsche Sentimentalität ist „Never Let Me Go“ fremd, vielmehr lässt er sein Publikum mit stillem Zorn und einem klaren Blick</p> <p>60 für das Wesentliche zurück. Und mit der Gewissheit, dass dies einer der wenigen Filme ist, die einen ein Leben lang begleiten werden.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(396 words)</p>
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4 Mediation

Your pen pal's English teacher is planning a science fiction film night on future societies. Having just read the *Spiegel Online* review of the film *Alles was wir geben mussten*, you would like to suggest the film *Never Let Me Go* as an option for the film night. Write an email recommendation to your friend's teacher in which you summarise the utopian and dystopian features of the society in the film as presented in the review.

Erwartungshorizont

Textinformationen

Autor	Kazuo Ishiguro
Titel	Never Let Me Go
Quelle	<i>Never Let Me Go</i> , Klett-Ausgabe, ISBN 978-3-12-579878-6, S. 262–264
Textformat (Textlänge)	Roman auszugsweise (765 Wörter)

Autor	David Kleingers
Titel	Ich spende, also sterbe ich
Quelle	<i>Spiegel Online</i> , 13.04.2011, http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/ishiguro-bestsellerverfilmung-ich-spende-also-sterbe-ich-a-756692.html (geprüft: 23.02.2015)
Textformat (Textlänge)	Zeitungsartikel (396 Wörter)

1 Content/Comprehension

a) Summarise the scientific developments presented in the novel excerpt.

According to Miss Emily the second half of the 20th century included amazing progress in science, especially in the field of medicine. As a result, illnesses like cancer have been cured. Miss Emily does not explain any details, but it becomes clear that genetic engineering has played an important part in this development. Although there are still limits to what scientists are allowed to do in the field of genetic engineering (cf. Morningdale scandal), reproductive cloning seems to have become legal. Clones are produced for the sole purpose of providing people with vital organs.

b) Outline how the relationship between 'normal' society and the clones developed.

The donation programme Miss Emily talks about relies on cloning human beings for the purposes of harvesting their vital organs. Tommy and Kathy are two of those clones. According to Miss Emily there have been different stages in the public's reactions to the programme:

- ♦ the public deliberately ignored where the organs came from and only considered the benefits of the new programme
- ♦ people began to worry about creating clones to serve as organ donors, but they were so relieved to be able to cure terminal illnesses that they ignored the qualms they had
- ♦ people pretended that the clones were inferior to human beings to justify their treatment
- ♦ a movement emerged which founded boarding schools like Hailsham where (at least some of) the clones could spend their childhood
- ♦ after the Morningdale scandal (a scientist in Scotland created designer babies) the movement lost all credibility, and the institutions were closed down; people returned to ignoring the issue

2 Form/Analysis

a) Examine Miss Emily's argumentative techniques and her use of language and explain what they reveal about her attitude towards the clones.

- ♦ **Argumentative techniques:** Miss Emily appeals to Kathy and Tommy (i.e. two victims) to understand how the donation programme developed. She looks at the development "historically" (l. 1), which implies an analytical approach in which she detaches herself from the victims' plight. She uses rhetorical devices to make her speech sound objective: antithesis (repeated use of "but"), rhetorical questions (e.g. "How can you ask a world ...", l. 16) and connectives to introduce conclusions ("so"). She seems to be justifying the horrendous, callous treatment of the clones.
- ♦ **Language:** Miss Emily's language is euphemistic. She refers to Tommy and Kathy as "students" who "have been brought into existence" for the donation programme. She does not employ terms like clones or cloning. She refers to the time before the donation programme was introduced as "the dark days" (l. 19) and explains that Hailsham had to be closed because society wanted the students "back in the shadows" (l. 24). Her choice

of words glosses over the stark realities of the programme. The enumerations she uses when she stresses that it was impossible to reverse the process (“their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends did not die ...”, ll. 21ff) also suggest that what happened was inevitable. Her use of pronouns is also striking. The first person plural pronoun “we” is often used in speeches to include the reader. When Miss Emily is speaking in this passage, however, she refers to the clones as “you” as opposed to “proper” (l. 34) human beings, whom she refers to as “we”.

- ♦ **Attitude:** Although Miss Emily claims to be concerned about the clones’ well-being and points out that their “little movement ... won many improvements” (ll. 29–36) for them, she is not the warm-hearted, caring guardian she pretends to be. The way she talks to Tommy and Kathy reveals that she is as indifferent to their suffering as the rest of society is. Calling them “my dears” is almost sarcastic.

b) Explain the effect this excerpt has on the reader.

In this scene Miss Emily tells Tommy and Kathy the truth about the donation programme and the role they have to play, thus destroying their hope of being granted the opportunity to enjoy their love. The society that has created them expects them to sacrifice themselves by donating their vital organs so that others can live. There is no escape. Miss Emily explains the development of the donation programme at great length and stresses the indifference and cruelty with which clones like Kathy and Tommy are treated. Although she has known them since they were children, she shows no compassion for them. Tommy and Kathy do not interrupt Miss Emily’s monologue/speech. They do not cry out in disbelief or horror. The two questions Kathy asks do not reveal whether they have fully understood the outrageousness of what Miss Emily has told them. The contrast between the shocking information and the understated way it is given in the scene heightens the impact it has on the reader. Evil is presented in very simple words, which probably increases the feeling of horror.

3 Comment/Text production

a) Write an interior monologue to illustrate what is going on in Miss Emily’s mind. Make sure it is in line with what you have found out about her in the analysis section.

The text should meet the following requirements:

- ♦ Change in the point of view: I = Miss Emily
- ♦ Content: consistent with the impression the reader gets of her in the novel extract, i.e. cold, selfish, lacks understanding/compassion for her former students
- ♦ Content: answers questions the text does not answer, e.g. does she see her former students as proper human beings? What feelings – if any – does their visit elicit in her?
- ♦ Style: in line with the style used in the character’s speech in the novel, i.e. banal, trite and euphemistic
- ♦ Syntax: imitation of thoughts/stream of consciousness

b) Using your knowledge of genetic engineering and artificial intelligence, comment on the attitude towards clones and cloning presented in this excerpt.

The students are expected to consider the following aspects:

- ♦ Form: elements of a comment
- ♦ Content: summarise the presentation of clones/cloning in the text which illustrates the ambivalence: On the one hand cloning is accepted as a means of providing people with the organs they need; on the other hand people refuse to consider clones as human beings and seem to be afraid of them
- ♦ Content: basic knowledge on the possibilities offered by genetic engineering today (therapeutic vs. reproductive cloning and genetic screening); moral/ethical issues associated with genetic engineering
- ♦ Content: information on artificial intelligence and the field of robotics
- ♦ Content: basic understanding of universal concepts, i.e. the dream of playing God, what makes us human beings?
- ♦ Content: convincing argumentation to present their personal opinion

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Individual answers with:

- ♦ an introduction and conclusion appropriate to the situation, the addressee (teacher) and purpose (film recommendation)
- ♦ an informative main part consisting of two or three paragraphs which deal (separately) with utopian and dystopian features of the society in the film
- ♦ the whole email should have a formal register which fits the situation and addressee.

Dear Mr/Ms ...

My pen pal Tom, who is in one of your English classes, has told me that you are planning a science fiction film night. While surfing online, I came across the review of a film called *Never Let Me Go* on the German website *Spiegel Online*. According to the reviewer this film is deeply moving, melancholic and memorable. The film, which is set in the UK at the end of the 20th century, might be an option for your film night as it presents an alternative vision of British society in an unusual way.

In *Never Let Me Go* postwar Britain initially seems to have developed into a utopia. Following a medical breakthrough in 1952, many diseases have been cured and lengthy suffering before death has become a thing of the past. The average life expectancy has risen to more than 100 years of age. At the same time, the idyllic boarding school Hailsham appears to be the perfect place to grow up.

In the course of the film, however, cracks in the perfect picture become visible. Students at Hailsham are constantly supervised with the help of electronic armbands and they are not allowed to leave the school premises. Intimidated by horror stories, they do not even dare to leave the school grounds. The children of Hailsham are clones designed to provide replacement organs. Their human counterparts in the outside world use these organs, and thus enjoy a long, healthy life. Usually, the clones themselves die before they turn thirty after a third or fourth transplantation.

The 'utopia' of the film turns out to be based on a routine of genocide, which denies clones their dignity by conditioning them from early childhood. Ironically, the clones are unaware of the cruelty and injustice of the world they live in.

I hope this information will make you consider *Never Let Me Go* as an option for your film night. You may want to check the Internet Movie Database for more information on the film before you make your decision.

All the best for your film night.

Yours sincerely

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