

## **ADAPTED: NEVER LET ME GO (2005) (Kazuo Ishiguro)**

### **QUICK THOUGHTS**

- Phil Svitek
- Marisa Serafini

### **AUTHOR BACKGROUND (Kazuo Ishiguro)**

- Awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature- October 5th, 2017. Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). He was made an OBE in 1995
- He has written eight books, which have been translated into over 40 languages
- “The Remains of the Day.”
- British novelist, screenwriter, and short story writer
- Born in Nagasaki, Japan on 8 November 1954
- Migrated to England with his family so his father, who was an oceanographer, could work with the National Institute of Oceanography
- He went to ‘Stoughton Primary School’ and the ‘Woking County Grammar School’ in Surrey, England
- In 1974, he enrolled in the University of Kent in Canterbury and attained a degree of Bachelor of Arts with two majors; English and Philosophy
- After his graduation, Ishiguro started working on fiction novels for almost a year after which he entered the University of East Anglia in 1980 for a master
- His thesis became his critically acclaimed first novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, published in 1982.
- Short story collection called ‘Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall’ was published in 2009.
- Has received 4 ‘Man Booker Prize’ nominations
- Ranked on number 32 on ‘The 50 greatest British writers since 1945’ by The Times
- “My parents didn't realize that we were going to stay in this country for so long, they felt responsible for keeping me in touch with Japanese values. I do have a distinct background. I think differently, my perspectives are slightly different.”
- When asked about his identity, the author says, “People are not two-thirds one thing and the remainder something else. Temperament, personality, or outlook don't divide quite like that. The bits don't separate clearly. You end up a funny homogeneous mixture. This is something that will become more common in the latter part of the century—people with mixed cultural backgrounds, and mixed racial backgrounds. That's the way the world is going”

### **DEVELOPMENT/CONCEPTION**

- “Over the last fifteen years I kept writing pieces of a story about an odd group of “students” in the English countryside. I was never sure who these people were. I just knew they lived in wrecked farmhouses, and though they did a few typically student-like things—argued over books, worked on the occasional essay, fell in and out of love—there was no college campus or teacher anywhere in sight. I knew too that some strange fate hung over these young people, but I didn't know what. In my study at home, I have a lot of these short pieces, some going back as far as the early '90s. I'd wanted to write a novel about my students, but I'd never got any further; I'd always ended up writing some other quite different novel. Then around four years ago I heard a discussion on the radio about advances in biotechnology. I usually tune out when scientific discussions come on, but this time I listened, and the framework around these students of mine finally fell in place. I could see a way of writing a story that was simple, but very fundamental, about the sadness of the human condition.”

- “One of the dangers you have to guard against as a novelist is repeating things you’re deemed to have done well in the past, just for the security of repeating them. I’ve been praised in the past for my unreliable, self-deceiving, emotionally restrained narrators. You could almost say at one stage that was seen as my trademark. But I have to be careful not to confuse my narrators with my own identity as a writer. It’s so easy, in all walks of life, to get trapped into a corner by things that once earned you praise and esteem.”
- “I’ve always liked the texture of memory. I like it that a scene pulled from the narrator’s memory is blurred at the edges, layered with all sorts of emotions, and open to manipulation. You’re not just telling the reader: “this-and-this happened.” You’re also raising questions like: why has she remembered this event just at this point? How does she feel about it? And when she says she can’t remember very precisely what happened, but she’ll tell us anyway, well, how much do we trust her? And so on. I love all these subtle things you can do when you tell a story through someone’s memories.”

### **FILMIC ELEMENTS**

- Hailsham
- The Cottages
- Genetic engineering and associated technologies (Cloning, Possibles)
- Donation Process, Surgeries
- Beached Boat
- Elephant Artwork

### **STORY LEGACY**

- Was named by *Time* as the best novel of 2005 and included in its list of the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to 2005.
- Most often critiqued as science fiction or dystopian literature by the scholarly community.
- HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY: “Cautionary tale regarding the abuse of science and technology on humans and their civil rights.”
- Swedish Academy praised Ishiguro's "novels of great emotional force," which have "uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world."

### **MOVIE DEVELOPMENT**

- Alex Garland, a long-time friend of Ishiguro, asked the author for the rights to the novel before he had finished reading it.
- Before the novel was published in 2005, Garland had already written a script for a possible film
- The film was directed by Mark Romanek from a screenplay by Alex Garland.
- Prior to the book's publication, Garland had approached the film's producers about a possible film, and wrote a 96-page script
- Produced by DNA Films, Film4, Fox Searchlight Pictures
- The producers initially had trouble finding an actress to play Kathy.
- Mulligan was cast in the role after Peter Rice, the head of the company financing the film, recommended her by text message while watching her performance in *An Education*.
- Mulligan, a fan of the book, enthusiastically accepted the role.

### **SIMILARITIES/CHANGES/ADDITIONS/RETRACTIONS**

- In the movie Tommy buys the Judy Bridgewater tape at the Bumper crop and gives it to Kathy. In the book Ruth gives it to Kathy who later loses it in, but Tommy and Kathy look for the tape in Norfolk.
- More memories are revealed about their childhood life during Hailsham in the book- Differences between Sales and bumper crops.

- More background on Ruth's characteristics and personality during Hailsham, then revealed in the book

#### **WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PORTRAYAL FOR EACH CHARACTER?**

- Kiera Knightly - Ruth
- Cary Mulligan - Kathy
- Andrew Garfield - Tommy
- Charolette Rampling - Miss Emily
- Sally Hawkins- Miss Lucy
- Andrea Riseborough - Chrisse
- Domhnall Gleeson - Rodney

#### **WHY ADAPT INTO MOVIE?**

- Subtle science fiction that speaks to the nature of humanity, examining life/death, what's really important and love
- Book is full of little anecdote that acts as scenes and can be filmed
- The book's narration translated well to VO
- Kathy was an observed in book, which allows for visuals

#### **THEMES**

- Director Mark Romanek has said that, as in the novel, everyone has to uncover their relationship to our own mortality; we have two options: either go against it, or try to figure out a way around it like the character Tommy does. Romanek hoped the audience of Never Let Me Go would be reminded of what is important: love, behaviour, and friendships. He recalled an email a person had written to him: "I saw your film and it made me cry and I haven't reacted to a film emotionally like that in years. And I called my father, cause I realized I hadn't spoken to him in 3 weeks and I told him how much I love him and how much I appreciated what a good father he's been."
- Andrew Garfield believes the story of Never Let Me Go is about humans, and exploring "what it is to have a soul, and how you prove what a soul is"; he says he enjoys the way the film is a "call to arms" about the positives of life. He adds that its message could hopefully remind people that they have a choice when they arise in the morning whether to pursue their own choice of activities for the day, or to do what they should do or are obliged to do.
- Keira Knightley feels that the film's story is alarming, but has said that the film is "more about humanity's ability to look the other way". "You know in fact that if your morals can go out the window if you think you can survive in a certain way, whatever your morals may be"

**NEXT ADAPTED:** Stardust - Neil Gaiman (1999)