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### No Humanity Without Sexuality

Sexuality may often be talked about in hushed tones and whispers amongst people, but the way it drives people's actions and thoughts is an integral part of being human. Moments like someone's first kiss or losing their virginity are defining events and are a part of discovering who you are as a person. As people discover themselves and who they are, their sexual identity is typically a big part of the discovery process. In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel "Never Let Me Go" he didn't want to portray the students simply as clones to be used up for their resources (vital organs). Ishiguro uses the students' discovery of their sexuality to showcase to the reader the connection between a person's sexuality, their humanity, and the power it holds over them.

As the students grow into their teenage years, their attentions, much like most normal teenagers, turn to sex, and their eagerness to explore this new part of their human nature develops into their social structure at Hailsham. As Kathy and her fellow students are only slightly aware of their true nature as clones, Ishiguro shows the power of sexuality by how it distracts their attention and creates the need to fit in by being active sexually (or at least the illusion that they are). Kathy talks about how the sexual rumors going around school, saying, "If everyone who claimed to be doing it really had been, then that's all you'd have seen when you walked about Hailsham—couples going

at it left, right, and centre” (97). As anyone that has been through high school can remember this type of gossip, the reader can draw a connection to this experience and see the students as just as normal kids that have to follow along with their friends to fit in. This social experience the students have with their sexuality displays the power it has to shape how they interact with each other, and distract them from their own fate.

Even as the students were aware that they could never have babies of their own, they had been told to treat sex with care so that they wouldn't offend the normal population. As a way to groom the students for their lives outside of Hailsham, they were taught how to fit in with the rest of society, giving them the idea that they can be just like everyone else as long as they followed a few rules. During a lecture about sex, Kathy recalls being told, “And even though, as we knew, it was completely impossible for any of us to have babies, out there, we had to behave like them. We had to respect the rules and treat sex as something pretty special” (84). This is taught to them as a way to protect themselves from exposing themselves as outsiders of the normal population. Although this paints them in a different light as the rest of the world, they can still hold onto their humanity and fit in with others, as long as they follow the rules.

Ishiguro displays the students path to a sexual identity as a common story that the reader can easily identify with. The way that Kathy confides with Ruth about her intense sexual desires can be seen as just a normal young girl trying to figure out why she's getting these funny feelings. During one of their late night chat sessions, Kathy asks “Ruth, I wanted to ask you. Do you ever get so you just really have to do it? With anybody almost?” (128). As Kathy is trying to reconcile why she is feeling obsessed with

sex, the reader can draw empathy from their own experiences growing up and discovering their own sexual feelings.

Ishiguro wanted to draw sympathy to the dark fate the students share, and by highlighting their sexuality, humanizes them to bring a deeper emotional response from the reader. If the students were portrayed as simple clones without all the complexities and depth of character that sexuality brings out, there would be very little emotional response when finding out how they are viewed in their society as a commodity. As Kathy shares about sexual discovery, Ishiguro is showing the power it has to distract them. The social structures that result from their discoveries shows that they behave just like regular people. The sexuality of the students shows its power to make them feel normal and as their tragic fate is being revealed, the reader will mourn their plight.

### Works Cited

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2005