

A room with a view  
and the remains of  
the day essay



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When comparing these texts I believe it is important to see how, firstly, the titles give us an outlook on the stories. "A Room With A View" by E. M. Forster has a positive connotation to it.

The word view literally, having not only the meaning of, "the act of seeing or observing but also meaning to have an opinion or a desired end or intention", shows that the book is likely to have a positive outcome at the end. It also gives us the start of a very important theme which is to run through the whole novel, that being, the importance of having one's own opinion and moving away from the opinion of the social class to which one is in. This gives an insight into what Lucy, the protagonist, is likely to be doing. There is also the fact that the title uses the word "A" which is a determiner which gives the sense of freedom as it is unspecific.

This makes us feel that it could be any view and this is only one perspective on things, but that is what is important Lucy's perspective things. "The Remains of the Day" by Kazuo Ishiguro on the other hand has a much more negative connotation. The literary meaning of the word remains being "pieces, scraps or fragments that are left unused or wasted, the passage of time or the body of a dead person, corpse" which for obvious reasons is a lot more negative. The most important part of this definition is the "left unused or wasted" part, because Stevens, the protagonist and narrator, has wasted his life, and it takes the journey, which he undertakes in the novel, for him to realise this. The "passing of time" part is also interesting as the novel takes the form of flashbacks, and the story is told over six days, but covering events of the past 30 years.

The time scale of six days also gives us a link to the bible and how God made man in six days, it mirrors Stevens's discovery of himself in six days.

Although this is more apparent to the reader than it is to him. Also the "The" in the title is again the determiner showing that the story is specific. Both Lucy in "A Room With A View" and Stevens in "The Remains of the Day" are largely repressed by the class which they are in. One critic states "Stevens has lived a repressed and stilted life in pursuit of an illusory goal and is left to reconcile himself to the truth that the man he served was hardly as honourable or noble as he believed". Stevens being a butler although being in the working class works for a prestigious family and his main repressor is himself, in the fact that his professionalism has stopped him doing many things, mainly allowing himself to fall in love with the woman he subconsciously loves.

Lucy is a middle class girl in '1908' when class ideology was highly respected and going against it was unheard of. This story was perhaps written by Forster as a homosexual, to show his own repression and need to break away from world norms. Lucy is torn between following a moral path to which her class has instructed her, to marry Cecil Vyse after she accepted his proposal, or to break it off and marry George Emerson, who from her mother's point of view would be an unacceptable husband. This moral dilemma is what mostly represses Lucy and holds her back from her true feelings for George. Stevens could be seen as trapped in Darlington Hall where he works.

He started there at a young age, and as head butler has been there the majority of his life and even in old age has remained there. His room gives us an insight to him and his mental state, Miss Kenton Says its “ dark and cold...

he walls are even a little damp... stark and bereft of colour”. Showing that his life is dark and lacking colour, which gives the reader the sense that he is lacking love in his life, not only from Miss Kenton but also from his father.

But this is not because they do not show the love, it is because he is too professional to accept their love. In this same scene Miss Kenton tries to brighten Stevens room by bringing flowers in, “ I thought these would brighten your parlour a little... it’s a shame more sun doesn’t get in here” he rejects this and symbolically rejects her at the same time.

He does not like change, and if we see his room like his mind then we see Miss Kenton as invading his mind, which is symbolically what is happening because she is getting close to him. This he does not like and so instead reverts back to professional talk and tells her off for an unreal problem.

Flowers have a connotation of life and love, so Miss Kenton is technically bring life and love in Stevens which is what he needs but he will not accept this because he is too professional. We can also get an insight in to Lucy from looking at the places she is in. When in Florence she describes Charlottes embrace like a fog “ it gave Lucy the sensation of a fog” symbolically meaning that Charlotte confuses and represses her like a fog, enveloping and drowning her.

The dictionary meaning of a fog being, a confused or unclear state, usually mentally or emotionally, in this case both mental and emotional stopping her  
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thinking what she wishes. She instinctively opens the window of her room “ when she reaches her own room she opened her window and breathed the clean night air”, to let out the stuffiness and fog, and symbolically free herself from Charlotte and her views. This is the start of Lucy’s freedom, she symbolically removes the repression and gives herself a view. This view of Florence is cyclical as the story ends again with her and George having a view of Italy.

But giving herself this view is the start of her breaking free and having her own opinion. After opening the window she is “ thinking of the kind old man who had enabled her to see” this is a very important statement as it foreshadows his influence on her later in the novel when he persuades her to see her true feelings for George and makes her accept that she loves him. In Kazuo Ishiguro’s “ The Remains of the Day, Stevens the butler presents us with an example of misguided attempts to define strength. Stevens spends his life in the pursuit of greatness, which he defines as “ dignity in keeping with his position” every day Stevens’ existence is geared toward the realization of this goal; as a result, he closes himself off to everything on the periphery of this single objective.

Lucy in “ A Room with a View” also strives for a goal to which she will never reach, the goal of approval. Not only her own approval of the situation to which she is in, but also the approval of everyone around her. She also strives to please everyone and in doing so ends up dissatisfied herself. This need to please everyone around is what represses her and holds her back, but in the end she breaks free from this repression by doing what pleases her and what she approves with-out considering what others may think, <https://assignbuster.com/a-room-with-a-view-and-the-remains-of-the-day-essay/>

because this would only stop her. This is a contrast to Stevens who although in the end tries to show Miss Kenton his true feelings, it is too little, too late and gives up, when he realises she is going back to her husband. He returns to Darlington to work the rest of his days alone.

Lucy manages to break this causal chain of unhappiness, and this shows her characters development from naive and feeble Lucy who's opinions are not her own, "' Ah,' said Miss Bartlett, repressing Lucy, who was about to speak" (A Room with a View pg; 24) to strong and powerful Lucy who is very much capable of thinking for herself. From the very start we can see that Lucy is going to change and become someone more powerful. There was a rebellious spirit in her which wondered whether the acceptance might not have been less delicate and more beautiful" (A Room with a View pg; 33). This shows she is going to go against what she is told and she has started to think for herself and this comes very early in the novel so foreshadows what is to come. It is George who manages to help Lucy overcome her repression and see her true feelings and opinions, " He carried her to the window, so that she, too, saw all the view" (A Room with a View pg; 228) symbolically opening up her mind to the world and him. Stevens's repression can sometimes be seen through the language he is using.

Discourse and language contribute to Stevens' self-subjugation in *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens in many ways appears a representation of the colonial and postcolonial subject. " His utilization of upper class English, exemplifies one form of assimilation and acculturation, since in order to perform his job, he must acquire the language of those he serves" says critic Irene Tung. Stevens refers to " good accent and command of language" as <https://assignbuster.com/a-room-with-a-view-and-the-remains-of-the-day-essay/>

superficial characteristics that can be separated from true dignity, which entails a constant absence of emotion. Yet his relationship with language is inextricably bound with his inability to emote.

This inability has prevented him from showing Miss Kenton his true feelings of love, so in that sense his job is repressing him from articulating what he feels towards her.