

The search for  
identity in never let  
me go by kazuo  
ishiguro



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Art is a form of expression that comes from an individual's creation. Whether it's to be the creator or the admirer, the person's interpretation is a true reflection of their soul. In his novel, *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro creates a world where the main characters are torn between being who they are as clones and finding who they are as individuals. Ishiguro uses symbolism, imagery and characterization to highlight that, despite how humans see themselves as in control of who they are, whether people conform to society's expectations or not, everyone is caught between the two in their search for identity.

Using Judy Bridgewater's tape and the art gallery as symbols, Ishiguro illustrates that Kathy is capable of exceeding her conforming identity "clone" and express who she truly is through art. Some people hold dear to their hearts a toy or even a blanket from their childhood, but Kathy on the other hand holds the Judy Bridgewater cassette tape. To her, this cassette meant more than anything: "What made the tape so special for me was the one particular song: track number three, *Never Let Me Go*". The art of music brings meaning to Kathy like nothing else ever has. The tape symbolizes Kathy's innocence as she went to Hailsham and all the memories she created there. This brings forward the identity she has created for herself as a person, as the tape "really got to her". The sound of the tape makes her have a desire for a connection that is emotional as well as physical. This speaks depth due to the surreal art of emotions that are showing when she plays the song: "There was no one else around, and I was playing this tape, this music. I was sort of dancing, with my eyes closed..." To Kathy, music is art to her ears. The song brings her back to a different time and place which

is why she closes her eyes. Never Let Me Go represents to her, a mother scared of losing her child. Listening to this song allows her to put herself in the person's shoes and feel as the "mother" is. This representation she creates for the lyrics demonstrates her true identity as a human who has real feelings upon different circumstances. The second symbol that plays a major role in the novel is the art gallery. Many of the students create different forms of art for the gallery in order to expose themselves as someone other than clones: "She told Roy that things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff, she said they revealed what you were like inside. She said they revealed your soul". The purpose of creating art is to create their identity. The more the students make art, the more they find meaning within themselves. The art galleries are places that unfold positive or even negative news throughout the whole novel in the search for who they are as humans. The art gallery in Norfolk depicts when Ruth thought she found her "possible." This shows how the students are in search for their past in order to continue as clones in the future. In the end, the Judy Bridgewater tape and the art gallery illustrate that art plays a major role in discovering who they are.

Through the use of imagery, animals and water are forms of art that represent parallels between how they are as clones and as real people. Students at Hailsham create animals through art. Tommy's animal drawings are very detailed with emphasis on the small specifications: 'tiny canals, weaving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive precision'. The way Tommy pays attention to each characteristic of the animals he draws, demonstrates the creative identity he creates for

himself. The way the animals are described allows the reader to make the connection that the animals are like the clones in the sense that they're treated like inhuman throughout the novel. The art he creates when drawing animals demonstrates his identity as a clone due to them not being in control of their fate. Real life animals are never shown, which therefore reveals the invisible wall of separation between clones and humans. The second form of imagery in the novel is through the description of water. The recurring use of water in the novel describes the student's unpredictable life at Hailsham: " It was nice and tranquil...I knew I wasn't in any danger". The water describes that, at that moment, their life was peaceful without any drastic events. The way the water moves, and acts correlates to the way their life has its ups and downs. At some moments " they've got to let go, drift apart" and at other times they're " holding on to each other... as hard as they can". This shows that in order to find their true identity they have to let go of certain difficult moments and hold on to the things or people that matter. The thought of who they are cloned from and their past memories at Hailsham are instances that should be moved past as they hold dear to their heart the masterpieces that made great impacts such as certain teachers and friends. Through the imagery of animals and water, certain objects or things represent who they truly are.

Through the characterization of Kathy and Tommy, the novel critiques identity through the way others view the individual compare to the way the person sees themselves. Kathy faces self-doubt when coming into contact with herself: " it's like walking past a mirror you've walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and

strange". The quote itself is an altered image of herself through the form of abstract art. This makes it clear that Kathy struggles for self-acceptance of her true identity that stands right in front of her. Terrified of what was happening to their lives as clones, she searches for validation of the person she truly is, and not what others painted her to be. Tommy on the other hand, does not conform to the typical artistic talent of a Hailsham student, therefore is the outcast compared to the other students: " A lot of the time, how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at " creating"". Tommy is not like the rest of the students due to his lack of artistry, which helps shape most students into who they are at Hailsham. He is very different from the rest of the clones due to the way he seeks an alternative identity than the one he is forced to lead. This demonstrates that Kathy and Tommy, both have the determination to surpass the identity they grew up with.

In the novel *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, the search for identity is caught between two conflicting teachings: one of a clone and one of a human. The symbolism of the Judy Bridgewater's tape and the art gallery describe Kathy's identity through treasured objects and artwork. The imagery of animals and water show the vivid correlation between what they're experiencing in the real world and the way objects are foretelling it. The characterization of Kathy and Tommy shows that despite their different personalities, they both have one thing in common: their quest to find their true selves. In the end, the two teachings eventually come together to create Kathy's true identity.