

Childhood in never let me go

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



How effectively do the writers represent childhood in *Never Let Me Go* and one or more of the short stories from the reader?

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel 'Never Let Me Go' takes place in an alternate dystopian world in England, during the late 1990s. The novel is essentially about a widespread virus that leaves people in need of vital organs. Test tube babies or clones were created for organ donations for the people that have been infected. When they reach a certain age, they start the process to donate their organs. 'The Father Thing' is a short story by Philip K. Dick, this is essentially a third person narration that concerns the replacement of a boy's father with an alien replacement. This paper will be comparing and contrasting the two stories together to see how they have relevance to each other, and how they differ from each other.

Ishiguro represents childhood in the novel 'Never Let Me Go' by exploring the protagonist's memory. The novel starts by Ishiguro introducing Kathy H, the protagonist by reflecting on her childhood that she shared with her friends at Hailsham School. Kathy's retrospective shows how she coped with the losses in her life by turning to memories of the past. This shapes the reader's experience by taking the journey with Kathy, as she reflects on her childhood years.

'The Father Thing' by Philip K. Dick correlates with this novel, as it is generally about a replacement of a boy's father with a replicated version. This is similar to 'Never Let Me Go' as Kathy H and her friends at Hailsham Boarding School were clones, and their purpose in life is to donate organs to their 'possible' (the person that they have been assigned),

meaning that they have a specific person that they have to donate their organs to.

Kathy deals with the great losses of her life, which are Tommy and Ruth, by focusing on her life at Hailsham School, long after it has closed. Kathy's nostalgia is very relevant in this novel as she is nearing the end of her time as a carer, as she is soon to be a donor herself. " They want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year." (Ishiguro, 2006, p. 3) Kathy explains that she soon has to become a donor after she has finished being a carer. Kathy then takes the reader back into her childhood, Ishiguro may do this so the reader can understand the characters and what they had been through in their younger years spent at Hailsham.

' The Father Thing' explores the theme of childhood as well, it could be suggested that the whole story told from Charles' point of view is made up as children tend to tell stories to make themselves sound more interesting. " Charles hesitated. He was only eight years old." (Dick, 2015, p. 1.) Implies that he was making it up as he went along, and the use of " hesitated" can be interpreted as him making the story of the ' father thing' up entirely.

' Never Let Me Go' also has the element of child-like dishonesty, which is shown through Ruth, one of Kathy's friends at Hailsham. There is another comparison that can be made between ' The Father Thing' and ' Never Let Me Go' which is the fact that the children that live at Hailsham are clones of other people that are around the country, whereas Charles thinks that the ' father thing' is a clone of his actual father. However, the children of

Hailsham in 'Never Let Me Go' are not aware that they are clones until they are older, they just think that they are in boarding school.

Ishiguro has presented a rose-tinted view of childhood as the children at Hailsham are praised for their creativity, they are unaware of the fact that they are going to be used for cloning in the near future. It could be suggested that Kathy could look upon her childhood as a lie, as she and some other students are told by Miss Lucy...

"None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you've even middle aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do." (Ishiguro, 2006, p. 80.)

When Kathy and the other students were told this, their childhood ended as they knew that the childhood dream that they had of becoming 'film stars' were not going to ever come true. Ishiguro almost creates the illusion that the children of Hailsham actually had a childhood as a result of it being stolen from them the minute that they were born. Kathy and Tommy, in retrospect, wish that they were aware of their future donors.

However, the narrative seems to disregard this as it focuses on the mundane aspects of Kathy's childhood at Hailsham. 'The Father Thing' does create the illusion of childhood as it is essentially about 3 boys that hunt down and kill an alien figure. Dick accurately captured the imagination of a young boy that is playing with his friends. "If we don't find it pretty soon," Daniels said, "I

got to go back home. I can't stay up much later." He wasn't any older than Charles. Perhaps nine.

Although we don't get the story told from Charles' point of view, we are still able to see how the mind of a child works- this is very cleverly carried out by the author. The ending of ' The Father Thing' can be said to be very ambiguous as it comes to a very abrupt end, this could be suggesting that the boys were on to another adventure as the whole story suggests that it is a child that has told a story about an adventure that him and his friends went on.

The main difference between the two stories is the fact that in ' The Father Thing' the boys in the story try to fight back against the clone. In ' Never Let Me Go' there is no rebellion against the fact that they will be donating their organs. When you read this novel, you sort of expect as a child that there would be some rebellion against that idea, however there is no uprising which is a real anti climax.

Perhaps Ishiguro wanted to create the idea that Kathy's happy childhood and her friendship with Tommy were her idea of a full and content life, maybe this is the reason that Kathy accepts her fate as a donor and reconciled herself to it quite early on in the novel. (Grade Saver, 2019.) Alternatively, Ishiguro is well known for his " lyrical tales of regret, fused with subtle optimism" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019) which could be interpreted to mean that Ishiguro deliberately made Kathy an optimist to put a positive spin on a story that was for the most part, a tragedy.

In conclusion there are a few similarities between 'Never Let Me Go' and 'The Father Thing', the theme of childhood draws the most comparisons between the two stories. The ideas of both of the stories conflict as there is an element of rebellion in 'The Father Thing' whereas in 'Never Let Me Go' there isn't any form of rebellion as the children of Hailsham seem to accept their fate. 'The Father Thing' seems to linger on the theme of childhood, the telling of the story from third person lets the reader view it from a different angle as it is basically like a child telling a story, with him and his friends.

We don't really get to see Kathy telling her story about her childhood from a child's point of view, she is reflecting on her childhood in the retrospective from her being an adult. We only get told of the 'happy' childhood that she describes at Hailsham, as she is reflecting on the past and as this is a memory Kathy may not be telling us of everything that happened at Hailsham by censoring the bad things that happened at the boarding school.

It may be hard for the reader to acknowledge that Kathy and the children at Hailsham had a childhood as they were told from an early age that they would essentially die young, which is enough to destroy a person's memory of their younger years, this only strengthens the idea that there was a strong amount of censorship within 'Never Let Me Go.'