

How kazuo ishiguro  
uses narrative  
techniques in order to  
create an impression  
of ...



In literature, there are two types of narrator: Reliable and Unreliable.

In this essay, I shall be exploring the ideas of James Wood in this topic and lead to the creation of an extra element in the piece they have written, and how it affects the reader. A classic example of the use of this writing style is Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. Ishiguro's protagonist makes the reader consider how credible he really is and assume the rest of the story for themselves. According to Wood, a reliable narrator often writes in the third person to take advantage of third person omniscience. This means that the narrator can refer to the view of several people referring to them as "him" or "her" in order to get a range of opinions on an occurrence to further prove its accuracy.

The qualities that define a reliable narrator are when: the narrator shares values with the implied author, shares values with the reader, accurately records his or her reality, encourages reader rapport and trust. On the other hand, an unreliable narrator is written in the first person, in order to create only one opinion on an occurrence which can make the reader question its reliability because there is only one view to back it up. It is often the case that the reader ends up knowing more about the unreliable narrator than the narrator himself. In the case of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, Stephens, his narrator is so blatantly unreliable, that he can be described as reliably unreliable because the reader is certain that what the narrator said can't be trusted, or he has a tendency to misinterpret situations. An unreliable narrator often lies deliberately out of self interest, denies his role in certain events from a lack of self awareness, expresses ideas or values that the reader may find reprehensible.

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Kazuo Ishiguro's butler fits many of the latter categories described in the paragraph above. In the book whenever a character asks him whether he knew Lord Darlington, he denies it right until the end of the book where he finally tells the truth. He makes excuses for himself once he confesses; he said he never really understood what he was doing and that he was just doing his job, and he often makes assumptions that are very inaccurate. Mainly the whole main part of the book: Travelling to see Ms Kenton in order to convince her to return to work at Darlington Hall because he read her letter and she sounded like she wanted to return. It is evident that Stevens wanted her to return so much that he convinced himself that she wanted to return to Darlington Hall in order to instigate a hope that she might return, or to make him pluck up the courage to go and see her. Ishiguro employs several ways of making Stevens' unreliability noticeable in his diction.

Whenever Stevens is telling us one of his memories of his past at Darlington Hall, he often uses the words "I recall" or other phrases that make us think that he is perhaps leaving out certain details or that his statements aren't entirely truthful. Whenever he tells us something, the narrative style that Ishiguro makes him speak in, is very digressive. Stevens holds certain details in order to construct a story to move away from the original point of his statement. "There are some very pertinent reasons why this memory has remained with me, moreover that come to think of it...

"Ishiguro gives us a comparison to this narrative style in the character of Miss Kenton. Whilst Mr Stevens refers to his memories, we always see Ms Kenton's arguments using direct speech which is a much more effective tool

when stating a point because more can be said to prove your point. Your dustpan Mr Stevens, you've left it out here..

. " Ms Kenton's arguments are created in a much better way than Mr Stevens who is often left to denial " I have other responsibilities to take care of at the moment Ms Kenton, I will deal with the matter shortly" and so his reliability is further diminished. Stephens descriptions of events in contrast are always reported speech rather than direct speech; this allows him to give his version of events rather than what everybody said. This way, he is able to miss out parts that don't portray him in a good light or that for another reason he is ashamed of. A good example of this is when Stephens describes his childhood. He is very vague and we are left with little clue all in all.

" my father was the embodiment of dignity... he possessed qualities in a time which weren't looked for in a butler let alone desired" Stephens reports his father's skill as a butler to us perhaps suggesting that he didn't really enjoy much of a childhood but rather that he was taught the trade of being a butler since he could walk but doesn't want to admit it.

Stephens also approaches people of a different status with a different manner. Ms Kenton tells Mr Stephens " Mr Stephens perhaps your father is getting too old to manage all of the tasks we have assigned to him, perhaps we should remove the more challenging ones such as carrying tray to help him" Mr Stephens reacts in denial and says that his father is as good as always although it is plain to see that he is old and struggling. However, Lord Darlington tells him the same thing, and he does as he is told to straightaway. This shows a very large level of snobbery on Mr Stephens' part

and that he only seems to listen to sense when the right person tells him. All in all, I believe that a reliable narrator is a character in a story who tells the story in a way that doesn't add up or makes the reader think as to what truly happens.

We see this in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* in the way Mr Stevens addresses us in reported speech in a very vague way. In this way, he is able to save face if he has done something that leaves him in a poor light. We also see an example of a reliable narrator in Ms Kenton whom speaks in direct speech which shows the accuracy of what she says and makes the reader trust in her judgements much more than the protagonist-Stephens. I believe that the effect of having an unreliable narrator in a story makes the reader take the initiative in what is happening in the story and think more independently as to what will happen next. A parallel story would be created when this happens, the narrator's version of events, and the reader's assumptions which tend to be more accurate.