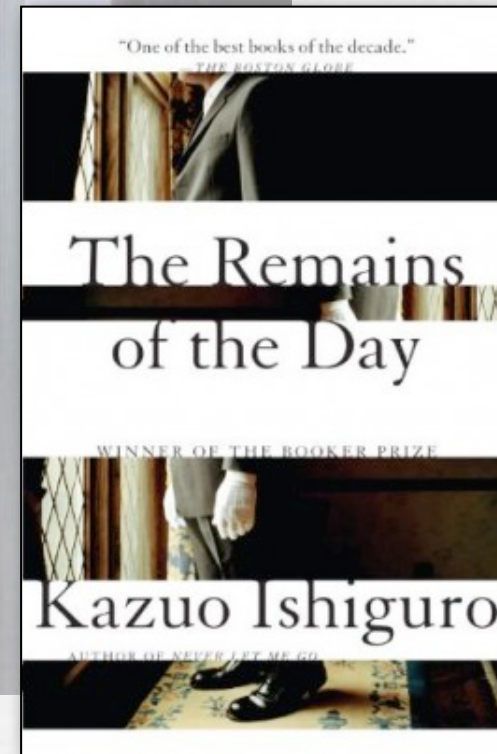


THE REMAINS OF THE DAY



Kazuo Ishiguro

THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

The Story:

- ✿ It is 1956 and there is a new owner of Darlington Hall. James Stephens, the Butler, makes a journey to recruit a housekeeper (Miss Kenton) he once employed. Along the way, he reminisces and reflects on their relationship, and what may have gone wrong, against the backdrop of a nation struggling to come to terms with the prospects of a new world war...



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Context:

- ✦ Author: Kazuo Ishiguro
- ✦ Historical Background: the rise of fascism (1920's - 1930's)
- ✦ Literary Connections: a fictional autobiography (*Jane Eyre*); a sense of how place shapes personal identity; physical places triggering thoughts and memories; symbols & motifs; internal conflict; themes: love, loss, war, denial, etc.; epiphanies (*Dubliners* & *Mrs. Dalloway*)



SALISBURY



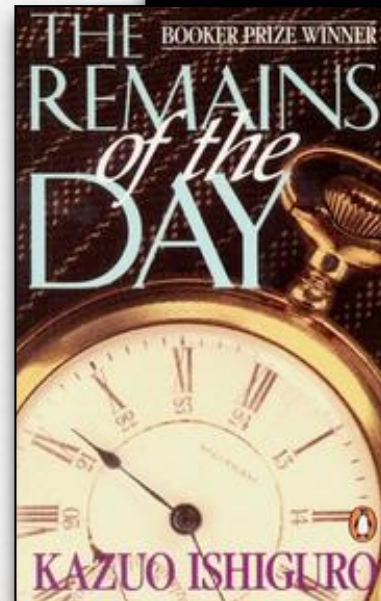
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Prologue: July, 1956 (Darlington Hall)

- ✿ Examine Stevens' style of speaking closely. What does it suggest about his character?

Day One: Evening (Salisbury)

- ✿ Why is Stevens so attached to Darlington Hall?
- ✿ What is significant about the old man's insistence that Stevens experience the view? What is the purpose of this scene?
- ✿ Why is "dignity" as the mark of a "great butler" so important to Stevens?



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Day Two: Morning (Salisbury)

- * How is the trip triggering repressed feelings in Stevens? Could his assumptions about Mrs. Benn just as easily be true of himself?
- * What do the exchanges between Stevens and his father reveal?
- * Assess Stevens' actions at the conference. Does it differ from Stevens' own assessment?
- * What lies behind the conflict between Lewis's and Darlington's attitude toward Germany?



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Day Two: Afternoon
(Mortimer's Pond, Dorset)

- * What do Stevens' denials of Lord Darlington indicate? Do you notice a change in Stevens' tone?
- * What do we understand from the visit to the pond?

Day Three: Morning
(Taunton, Somerset)

- * Why does Stevens' fail at banter?
- * What is symbolic about the signpost?
- * Is Stevens proving to be an unreliable narrator? Can you find any irony in his arguments?



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Day Three: Evening

(Moscombe, near Tavistock, Devon)

- ✦ Note how trivial things have greater significance: the fog, Miss Kenton's hands, Stevens' "pantry" and the flowers she puts there, etc.
- ✦ What might be the climax to the odd relationship between Stevens and Miss Kenton? What about the rising and falling action?
- ✦ What are "the remains of the day?"
- ✦ Does Stevens make a psychological breakthrough in this chapter? He denies Lord Darlington three times. Hmm...



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Day Four: Afternoon (Little Compton, Cornwall)

- ✱ Explain Stevens' response to Miss Kenton's news.
- ✱ Can you connect this episode and Stevens' feelings about his "triumph" to the 1923 conference? What's the tragic irony?

Day Six: Evening (Weymouth)

- ✱ What's ironic, for Stevens, about Miss Kenton's return to her husband? What imagery and symbolism marks the pier scene?
- ✱ Compare Stevens' conversation with the retired butler to his encounter with the old man at the beginning. Has he changed?
- ✱ Compare / contrast the end of the book with the movie version.



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What is the effect of each of the narrative approaches used in the novel?

- * The unreliable narrator
- * Pre-emptive tactics
- * Three points of view
- * The imagined reader
- * Time and Place



The novel may be best appreciated as a character study. If so, what do we learn from Stevens? Do we admire him or feel sorry for him? Has his life been a success, or a waste?

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Group Work/Classroom Antics: Consider the following possible themes in the novel. In 5-7 minutes, present a sketch showing how one of these themes (or another of your interpretation) is expressed in the novel.

- * Banter
- * Dignity
- * English vs. Americans
- * Seeing & Blindness
- * Triviality
- * Symbiosis

