

Klara and the Sun – Kazuo Ishiguro (2021) – Knowledge Organiser

Contexts and concepts	
Ishiguro: The author himself is interested in the potential/dangers of genetic engineering. He discusses this in another novel <i>Never Let Me Go</i> as well as in several interviews and articles.	Technology: The novel shows how technology can be used to help people with the AFs being designed to keep children company. However, there is also a danger that the robots will replace humans as seen with Paul, Josie's father.
Environment: the focus on the Sun and the Cootings Machine polluting the earth highlights how technology and city life is damaging the environment	Ethics: The novel examines the ethics behind technology and how much robots/drones could interact with humans and their lives. It also examines the ethics behind genetic engineering with the lifted children and Josie's clone.
Literary context: <i>Klara and the Sun</i> is both a dystopian and a Science Fiction novel. These novels focus on the future and how society can be changed by technology, a world event or divisions in society.	Class and wealth: the novel examines how society is separated through the 'lifted' and 'unlifted' which means others have more chances of success than others. It also shows how this creates unrest and bigotry.

Themes and how they might link to character and contexts	
Loneliness: Loneliness is a very 'human' condition and one which Klara has been designed to help with. Josie is lonely as she is homeschooled, and Klara becomes her 'friend'. All the other humans in the novel are lonely too as they do not have as much interaction with each other and their jobs/roles are being replaced with technology.	Growing up: Both Josie and Rick are young people throughout the majority of the novel, and we see, through Klara's narrative, how they mature and develop. Josie and Rick are in love and have a 'plan' to be together which fades as they both grow older and in different directions. Klara, although she is a machine, also grows as she learns more and more about human emotions and motivations throughout the novel.
Social Divisions: Josie and Mother are from a privileged, wealthy background. Josie is 'lifted' so is educationally gifted. Rick is not and he and his mother suffer as a consequence. Paul, who was an engineer, has been 'substituted' and lives in a different part of town. Miss Helen and Paul discuss the growing divisions and how there could be issues.	Modern life: Klara is a B2, Artificial Friend who is powered by solar energy. They are popular but there is also some ill-feeling towards them. The people in the novel all rely on technology – Josie has an 'oblong' for school and Rick has his bird drones. Modern life, especially in the city, seems impersonal, violent and lonely as although technology has solved some issues, it has created others.
Love and relationships: There are lots of different relationships in the novel and Klara learns about these different emotions through observing them. Rick and Josie have a young love connection whilst family relationships and love are explored through Josie, Mother and Paul as well as Rick and Helen.	Grief and loss: Josie and her mother have suffered a great loss with the death of Sal. Mother is clearly affected by this and tried to clone Sal and then Josie. The grief is unresolved in the novel, and we can feel the sadness in both Mother, and Miss Helen; both of whom have lost loved ones and find it difficult to talk about it.

Characters and what Ishiguro may have wanted them to represent	
Klara: is the narrator of the novel and we see everything through her eyes. She is a B2 AF who is extremely observant and keen to learn about human behaviour. She believes the Sun has healing properties and begs him to help Josie.	
Josie: is a young girl who lives in the countryside with her mother. Due to being 'lifted', she is often unwell and lonely. She is in love with Rick but is also aware that their relationship is not equal. She is kind but also argues with her mother and Klara. She grows throughout the novel from a sickly, social awkward teenager to a woman about to go off to college for a new life.	
Mother: works hard and does not get to spend much time with Josie. She is grief-stricken and guilty about the death of her daughter, Sal and does not want to lose Josie too. She is kind to Klara and sees how she loves Josie and wants to protect her.	
Rick: lives next door to Josie with his mother. He is 'unlifted' but is clever and builds his own drones. He is kind and looks after his mother as well as Josie and Klara. He accepts his life in the end and seems happy with his choices.	
Melania: is the housekeeper for Mother and Josie. She is very protective of the family and excludes Klara at first. She learns to trust her and asks her to look after Josie when she goes into the city to have her portrait done.	
Miss Helen: is Rick's mother who is ill. She adores him and feels lonely without him but wants him to go to college. She feels guilty for being able to 'lift' him and tries to get Vance to help him, but this is unsuccessful.	

Plot summary
Part 1: The book opens with Klara and the other AFs (Artificial Friends) in an inner-city store. Klara spends time with Rosa, who is another AF, and the Manager rotates them around the store so they can be seen from outside. Klara worships the Sun and tries to get 'his' light as much as possible. Klara is particularly observant and tells us what she sees from the street such as the Beggar man, his dog and the 'Cootings machine' which she believes is causing Pollution and hurting the sun. When she is in the window, Josie, who is ill, sees her and wants her as her AF. The end of part 1 sees Klara being bought by Josie and her mother.
Part 2: Klara begins life with Josie, Mother and Melania Housekeeper in the countryside. Klara goes outside for the first time and thinks that the sun goes to sleep in McBain's barn as it sets near there. Josie is ill and homeschooled so is lonely while Mother is at work. We also learn that Josie had a sister (Sal) who died and both she and Mother are coping with their grief. We are introduced to Rick who is very close to Josie. Josie makes him come to an 'interaction' meeting with her other homeschooled friends. They mistreat Klara and tease Rick, who leaves. Mother takes Klara to Morgan Falls, a spot where she used to go with Sal and Josie, and asks Klara to walk, talk and act like Josie. Josie is upset that Klara went out with Mother without her and Klara is concerned that she has let Josie down.
Part 3: Josie is very ill and cannot attend her lessons. She draws most of the day and plays games with Rick. We learn that she has been 'lifted' so have been genetically changed to be more intelligent. Rick has not been. Rick and Josie fall out and he does not come to visit. Klara takes a note from Josie to his house, and she meets his mother, Miss Helen. She is also ill and confides in Klara what she wants Rick to study for Atlas Brookings college which takes 'unlifted' students. She also tells Klara about a time when she saw Mother playing with a child/AF who looked exactly like Sal – only this was after Sal had died. Rick helps Klara get to McBain's barn as she believes that the Sun can help cure Josie in the same way he did the Beggar Man and the Dog when she was at the store. So, she goes there to ask him and vows to help destroy the Cootings Machine as she believes it is polluting the air and upsetting the Sun. Rick and Josie make up and he visits the house again. Klara is also asked to go into the city with Josie as she is sitting for a portrait. Rick and Miss Helen are also going so Rick can meet a 'contact' of Miss Helen to help him get into college. Melania is very distrustful of the portrait painter for Josie and asks Klara to keep her safe.
Part 4: Josie, Klara, Mother, Rick and Miss Helen all go into the city. Paul, Josie's father, meets them. Paul is a 'substitute' who has been replaced at his job and now does not work and lives in a different part of the city. Josie, Klara, Mother and Paul all go to visit Mr Capaldi, the portrait painter. He asks Josie to pose and asks Klara to take some tests and talk to him while this going on. Paul is very against Josie sitting for the portrait and when he finds out that Mr Capaldi is making a clone of her to put onto Klara, he takes Josie away in a taxi. Mother and Mr Capaldi explain to Klara that they want her to become Josie if anything should happen to her and Klara agrees. Josie and Mother want to talk so Paul takes Klara in the car to look for her old store. She confesses that she really wants to find the Cootings Machine. They find it and use some liquid from Klara to destroy the machine. When they get back, Rick is meeting with Mr Vance from Atlas Brookings College. Mr Vance was Miss Helen's old boyfriend, and she is hoping he will help Rick. Vance initially praises Rick's drone models but then turns on Miss Helen and lectures her about asking for 'favouritism' and states how he is still hurt about how their relationship ended. On the journey home, Klara sees another, newer, Cootings Machine and feels that she has failed Josie.
Part 5: Josie gets very ill and there are fears she may die. Klara and Rick go back to the Barn to ask the Sun for help. Klara believes the Sun wants to see true love and so asks Rick if he is really in love with Josie and he says he is. Rick visits Mother who feels guilty about Josie and how having her lifted caused her to be ill. He tells her that Josie loves her and wouldn't want her life to be any other way. Klara opens all the curtains and encourages the Sun to shine in on Josie who starts to wake up and feel better.
Part 6: Josie is better, and years pass by. Josie does her lessons and prepares to go to college. She goes away a lot more and needs Klara less and less. Rick has a job and travels around in a car. He and Josie are no longer as close as they were and have abandoned their plans to be together. Klara is slowing down and says goodbye to Josie as she goes to college. Mr Capaldi wants to take her apart, but Mother does not let him. The final pages of the book are Klara left with her memories in 'The Yard'. She sees the manager who comes by to see her old AFs from the store.