



Klara and the Sun Kazuo Ishiguro

This is Lit Book Club Discussion Guide



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About this guide

This guide has been created to help you run a book club with your students.

The aim is to help you guide their reading as well as encourage discussion and enjoyment! The purpose of the club is to move away from the 'formal' assessment for GCSE and just read the book through an inquiring and critical lens.

As *Klara and the Sun* is a popular book and is currently a set text on some KS4 qualifications, there are some pre-existing guides available. This guide will refer closely to these and provide links for you to refer to.

We are extremely grateful to Penguin for access to their guide.

The 2 main guides you may want to print off before reading the book are:

- The [Pearson Edexcel Knowledge Organiser](#) and [Key Links to Support Teachers](#) are both useful documents for you to have to hand. These materials are for use for the International GCSE English Literature so will refer to assessment objectives. They do offer a useful overview of the text and some of the links in this guide have been taken from these materials.
- The Penguin GMA Book Club Pick Reader's guide is [here](#). This has some useful questions and guidance on the main themes of the book.

About the book and author

Klara and the Sun was written by Kazuo Ishiguro and published in 2021.

It is Ishiguro's eighth book. The novel has been longlisted for the Booker Prize and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction. Ishiguro was also awarded the Nobel prize for Literature in 2017.

Please note: This book covers some sensitive issues including grief and loss, death of a child, terminal illness and references to violence. It is advised that teachers read the book before sharing with students. Read this warning to students so they are aware that these are elements which will come up as they are reading.

Possible activities:

1. Encourage students to read about the author and his motivations for writing *Klara and the Sun*. The Waterstones website has an interesting interview with the author [here](#). The author also the novel and his life in a video interview [here](#). Ask students to read the interview and watch the video to get a feel for the book, the writer and his motivations. How does this make them feel about the book they are going to read?
2. This book is often described both a dystopian novel **and** a science fiction novel. Discuss what these terms mean with your students. There is some information about both of these terms in the [Pearson Edexcel Knowledge Organiser](#) or in the [Key Links to Support Teachers](#).
3. The book focuses Klara, an 'Artificial Friend' and how she interacts with the humans around her. Ask students to read the summaries of the books in [Appendix 1](#) of this guide. Which one do they think is more appealing and why? Which one helps them to understand the main themes and what is going to happen in the book?
4. Now students know a little more about the book and the author, does this make them feel ready to read the book? Is it important to know these things before you start reading? Ask them to think about what they look at when they are choosing which book to select – how do they decide?

Before Reading

Take some time to talk to your students about the main themes of the book and look at the title/cover to get some context.

Possible activities:

1. A good starter activity can be to ask students to look at the cover of the book and the title. Discuss what they think it might mean? What might the book be about? Do the recommendations from reviewers and the fact that Ishiguro is a Nobel Prize winning author impact their views in anyway?
2. The [Elmbridge Public Library readings](#) could be a good place to introduce the students to the opening chapter. There is also a brief synopsis of the text at the start of the first video along with a note about Klara being the narrator. Students could listen to around 15 minutes of this to get a feel for the book and the tone.
3. You may also want to use this as an opportunity to bring up the content of the book if you haven't already done so. Remind students what the book is about and the themes/issues it raises.

Reading the book

This is obviously the main activity and your role is to facilitate the reading as and when you feel you need to. We want students to read at their own pace and enjoy the book away from the 'shackles' of GCSE but also to become more active readers and be able to pick up on themes, ask questions and discuss the book with others.

Possible ways to approach the book and discussing the book in a group setting:

1. Below is a very brief guide to how you may want to chunk up the text for reading and some of the questions you could ask. Each section of the book is summarised in more detail in the [Pearson Edexcel Knowledge Organiser](#)

(a) Part One – Klara and life in the Store

Discussion questions:

- What kind of 'person' is Klara? What makes her seem human vs. not?
- How does the setting (the store, the street) shape your understanding of the world of the novel?
- Why is the Sun so important?
- How do you feel about Klara being the narrator of the text?

(b) Part Two – Life at home with Josie

Discussion questions:

- How does Klara and Josie's relationship develop? Is it a real friendship?
- What do you think about Rick?
- What does the novel suggest about inequality or "advantage"?
- How does Klara fit in with the family?

(c) Part Three – Josie's condition worsens – Klara plans to heal her

Discussion questions:

- Why does Klara believe the Sun can heal Josie?
- How do different characters respond to Josie's illness?
- What does the reader learn about hope and belief in this part of the novel?
- Is Klara becoming more 'human'?

(d) Part Four– the Mother’s plan for Klara

Discussion questions:

- What is your reaction to the Mother’s plan? Can you understand why she might want to do this?
- What makes up a person? Can they simply be ‘replaced’?
- Is the Mother acting out of love, fear, or something else?
- How does this change how you see Klara?

(e) Part Five– Klara asks the Sun for help

Discussion questions:

- Why is Klara willing to sacrifice part of herself for Josie?
- Is Klara showing human traits?
- What do you think about her plan? Did it work?
- How do we interpret the role of the Sun both here and in the novel overall?

(f) Part Six– Josie’s recovery and Klara’s ending

Discussion questions:

- How do you feel about Klara’s ending?
- Is Klara treated fairly by Josie in the end?
- Did Klara achieve her purpose?
- Is Klara a more sympathetic character than the people?

2. If you would prefer something more open ended, you could ask students to fill out their own knowledge organiser as they go along. You can delete the content from the [Pearson Edexcel Knowledge Organiser](#) and ask students to fill out the sections of content and character as they go along. There are also some great questions for discussion in the Penguin GMA Book Club Pick Reader’s guide [here](#)
3. To help students listen along with some of the book as they read, the [Elmbridge Public Library readings](#) on YouTube are quite clear and free to access.

After Reading

Although these activities have been placed in this area of the guide, you may want to introduce some of the tables around capturing themes and character progression before students start reading to allow them to take notes. However, you may feel that this will distract them from enjoying the process of reading and would prefer to leave this until after they have read the book for the first time.

Even though some of these after reading activities may feel a little like GCSE in terms of thinking about themes/characters etc, students do not need to think about it in terms of assessment objectives! This is just to help them discuss the main areas of the book and why these are important to the plot, character development and how they made them feel.

Encourage students to talk about what they enjoyed or didn't enjoy about the book. They can be honest and admit that it wasn't something they enjoyed if they didn't - everyone has different literary tastes and this is part of reading for pleasure. Explain how they are not going to think every book they read is amazing but there is likely to be at least something which touched them or made them think even if the overall story or theme wasn't really something they happen to enjoy. Here you may want to ask them about what books/genres they might enjoy reading next. Would they like to read more like this book or move onto something completely different?

Possible activities:

1. Ask students to discuss their initial thoughts of the book. Some of these open-ended questions may help.

What are your overall impressions of this novel?

- Which moments stick most in your memory and why?
- Which characters do you like best and why?
- Which other novels does it remind you of and why?
- How gripping did you find the story?
- What are your thoughts about how the book was written?
- Based on reading *Klara and the Sun*, how likely are you to read other novels by Kazuo Ishiguro?

2. The [Key Links to Support Teachers](#) has some next steps and ideas for discussion around the more contextual elements of the text such as Sci-fi vs Dystopia, the role of AI and other topics students may want to discuss.
3. You may also want to come back to the synopsis at the back of this guide and ask students to read them again to see how well they 'match' the book and its content now they have read it. Perhaps they could even write one of their own?

Writing a review

After students have finished reading and discussing the text, ask them to create a short review to share with Pearson. Encourage students to be creative in how they respond to the book. The purpose of the review is to share personal reactions, and it doesn't need to be a formal piece of writing. Students should feel free to focus on what stood out to them, how the book made them feel, and whether they would recommend it to someone else.

Reviews could take a variety of formats, for example:

- chat or message-style conversation with a friend, talking about the book and why they would (or wouldn't) recommend it
- a short voice note or podcast-style discussion
- video review or informal vlog
- social media-style post or thread
- or a traditional written review, if they prefer

Whichever format they choose, the emphasis should be on honest responses and clear communication of ideas, rather than length, technical accuracy, or formality. Students do not have to be complimentary if they did not enjoy the book — thoughtful disagreement and differing opinions are part of meaningful reading and discussion.

If you would like to use the Pearson templates to help students write their own review, they can be found in the 'This is Lit' resource pack on our website [here](#).

Possible activities for writing a review:

1. Ask students to read some different styles of reviews such as the ones here
 - a. [The Bibliofile](#)
 - b. [The Guardian](#)
 - c. [Foyles](#)
 - d. [Storygraph](#)
 - e. [Goodreads](#)

Do they agree with the views expressed here? Encourage students to look at some of the different star ratings on examples in d and e and think about why people may have

opposing views to them about the book? Can they see why some may love the book and others don't?

2. There are some excellent GCSE English Language resources around writing a review and how to structure it on the BBC website which you may want to use with students. Or they can use the examples above to help them think about the style and the tone they want to adopt for their review. [BBC Bitesize](#)

Appendix 1

Summaries of *Klara and the Sun*

1. [Penguin website](#)

Book Description

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • Once in a great while, a book comes along that changes our view of the world. This magnificent novel from the Nobel laureate and author of *Never Let Me Go* is “an intriguing take on how artificial intelligence might play a role in our futures ... a poignant meditation on love and loneliness” (*The Associated Press*). • A GOOD MORNING AMERICA Book Club Pick!

Here is the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass on the street outside. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her. *Klara and the Sun* is a thrilling book that offers a look at our changing world through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator, and one that explores the fundamental question: what does it mean to love?

2. [Waterstones website](#)

Waterstones SAYS

A luminous new novel from the Nobel Prize-winning author of *Never Let Me Go* and *The Remains of the Day*, *Klara and the Sun* explores the uncharted implications of AI to human relationships and the abiding question of what it means to love.

Longlisted for the Booker Prize 2021

Shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award 2022

From the bestselling and Booker Prize winning author of *Never Let Me Go* and *The Remains of the Day*, a stunning new novel - his first since winning the Nobel Prize in Literature - that asks, what does it mean to love?

The novel tells the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully

the behaviour of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass in the street outside. She remains hopeful a customer will soon choose her, but when the possibility emerges that her circumstances may change for ever, Klara is warned not to invest too much in the promises of humans.

A thrilling feat of world-building, a novel of exquisite tenderness and impeccable restraint, *Klara and the Sun* is a magnificent achievement, and an international literary event.

Publisher information

Publisher: Faber & Faber

ISBN: 9780571364909

Number of pages: 352

Dimensions: 198 x 129 x 21 mm

Weight: 294 g

Language: English

Edition: Main

3. Google AI – AI Overview

Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro is a dystopian novel narrated by Klara, an "Artificial Friend" (AF) with high observational skills. She is purchased for Josie, a sick, genetically "lifted" teenager. Klara seeks to save Josie by appealing to the Sun, which she believes has healing powers, exploring themes of love, humanity, and AI.

Key Plot Points and Characters

Key Details and Plot Points

- **The Setting:** The story takes place in a near-future, dystopian US where children are genetically engineered ("lifted") for academic success and often home-schooled via screens, leading to extreme social isolation
- **Klara's Purpose:** Klara is an AF, a solar-powered robot designed to be a companion. She is exceptionally observant, perceptive, and deeply dedicated to her human, Josie.
- **Josie's Sickness:** Josie is fragile and suffering from a mysterious illness, likely caused by the "lifting" process that also killed her sister.
- **The Sun Worship:** Klara observes the world from a store window, then from Josie's home. She believes the Sun is a loving, divine entity that can heal humans. She makes a deal with the Sun to cure Josie.
- **The Plan:** Klara attempts to "heal" Josie by destroying a "Cootings Machine," which is a construction vehicle producing pollution that she believes blocks the Sun's nourishing rays.
- **The Climax and Ending:** Klara takes a dangerous journey to achieve this goal. While Josie eventually recovers, the novel reveals a plan by Josie's mother to have Klara "continue" (replace) Josie if she dies, which Klara concludes is impossible because she cannot replicate the unique, loving essence of a person.