

Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

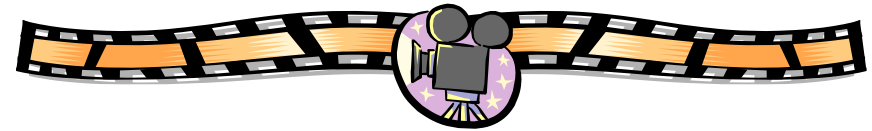
What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

Some facts about the film

- Carey Mulligan had to learn how to drive for this movie and did a two-week intensive course but failed the driving test. The production team had to shoot the scene on a private road, where she was allowed to get behind the wheel.
- Although not made much of in the film, the novel's title comes from a song on the American cassette tape, *Songs After Dark* by fictional singer Judy Bridgewater, which Tommy gives to Kathy.
- The film is based on the novel of the same name by Kazuo Ishiguro, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2005, a prize Ishiguro won in 1989 for his novel *The Remains of the Day*.
- British composer, Rachel Portman, worked on the music for four months. Portman said that because of the film's sad themes, she wanted to "put some hope" and humanity into the music. Believing that a "huge sweeping score" would not have fit *Never Let Me Go*, most of the score was written for piano, strings and harp, with solos for violin and cello. "If you use a solo instrument, it's like having a voice," she says. "It highlights the emotion." But, she adds, "the violin is played with virtually no vibrato, because I didn't ever want it to sound sentimental. For my own taste, I stay on the side of restraint, because I think it works better in film." Her work on *Never Let Me Go* earned her a San Diego Film Critics Society Award for Best Score.
- At rehearsals, Mark Romanek would have the younger actors observe the older actors practise the first-act scenes. This had a double purpose: the older actors would have a memory of having played those scenes, while the child actors would get a better idea of how a more skilled actor would play their part.



**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

3rd Apr Precious
8th May Creation
5th Jun Keeping the Faith
3rd Jul Never let me go
7th Aug The Illusionist (2010)
4th Sep Lemon Tree

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchingdon Road
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Never let me go

Never Let Me Go tells the story of three children who spend their childhood at a seemingly idyllic English boarding school, one where the students are kept separate from the rest of the world because they are special and have been chosen to fulfill some great destiny. It is only as the film develops that they finally discover what that destiny is. As they grow into young adults, the three have to come to terms not only with the strength of love they feel for each other, but also the haunting reality that awaits them. In telling the story, the film examines issues of fate, acceptance, love, jealousy and whether it is more loving to protect people from the truth or whether that is an act of betrayal.

***** SPOILER ALERT ***** It is impossible to discuss this film without touching on some of the key plot twists. If you are worried that this may spoil your enjoyment, please only read the rest of this leaflet after watching the film!

Acceptance / Fate

In response to the film or novel, people often ask “Why didn’t they run away?” But there are some things you cannot run away from—in particular, your own mortality. We are all going to “complete” one day, and Kathy, Tommy and the rest know that. How much should we accept the path that seems to be set out for us? And how much should we fight against it? When faced with a short time to live, are we more likely to become “heroes” or “hedonists”?

Life is precious

Ruth, Tommy and Kathy exhibit great dignity in the way they accept their fate, spending their limited time pursuing love and restoring relationships. For them, what is important is not the imminence of death but the preciousness of life. When time is limited, you have to make as much of every day as you can, not worrying about the past or the future, but living for and in the moment. How good are you at “enjoying the moment”? If we trust that God will always hold us in his loving hands, why do we fret so much about what the future holds?

What does it mean to be human?

Kathy H and the others don’t have last names because they are not “normal people”. Yet, despite their origins, Kathy, Tommy and Ruth all share those very human desires for love and friendship. Meanwhile, the art at Hailsham was an attempt to show that clones do have a soul. What does it actually mean to be human? And, if one compares the clones behaviour with the treatment they receive from the rest of society, who is acting in the most decent, humane way?

Caring for other living creatures

Hailsham was actually an experiment to improve the living conditions and alter society’s attitudes towards clones. After all, if the clones are going to literally give their lives for the sake of others, it seems only fair they have a decent life of their own. One might compare it with organic, free-range farming as opposed to the more grim “battery” methods. Sadly the experiment loses its funding and Hailsham is closed down. How well do you think we care for other living creatures? How much do we exploit them? And how much do we really care for their welfare?

Memorable Quotes

Kathy My name is Kathy H. I'm 28 years old. I've been a Carer for 9 years. And I'm good at my job. My patients always do better than expected and hardly ever classified as agitated, even if they're about to make a donation. I'm not trying to boast, but I feel a great sense of pride in what we do. Carers and Donors have achieved so much. That said, we aren't machines. In the end it wears you down. I suppose that's why I now spend most of my time not looking forwards, but looking back. To the Cottages and Hailsham and what happened to us there. Me. Tommy. And Ruth.

Kathy It had never occurred to me that our lives, which had been so closely interwoven, could unravel with such speed. If I'd known, maybe I'd have kept tighter hold of them and not let unseen tides pull us apart.

Ruth We are modelled on trash.

Miss Lucy You have to know who you are, and what you are. It's the only way to lead decent lives.

Miss Emily We didn't have to look into your souls, we had to see if you had souls at all.

[last lines]

Kathy I come here and imagine that this is the spot where everything I've lost since my childhood is washed out. I tell myself, if that were true, and I waited long enough then a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy. He'd wave. And maybe call. I don't know if the fantasy goes beyond that, I can't let it. I remind myself I was lucky to have had any time with him at all. What I'm not sure about, is if our lives have been so different from the lives of the people we save. We all complete. Maybe none of us really understand what we've lived through, or feel we've had enough time.

Science

We eat animals and have developed methods to farm suitable specimens. As science improves, it may be possible to use animals to produce life-saving organs and, given time, even produce clones similar to those in the film. How do you react to such things? Where is the ethical divide? Is there one?

Telling the truth

How do you respond to Miss Lucy? Was she right to tell the children what was happening? Or is it sometimes better to keep people “in the dark” for their own good? And who has the right to make such decisions?

Origins

Ruth’s perception of where she comes from has a huge impact on her sense of worth. How do your beliefs about human origins influence your ideas about our worth?