

Summer Reading 2025 for ALL JUNIORS and SENIORS

All juniors and seniors will be reading the novel, *Klara and the Sun*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. Before reading, students should review the notes on the author, vocabulary listing, and guiding questions. Although students DO NOT have to submit any writing at the beginning of the school year, this information will help students more effectively comprehend the text and reflect on it. Students will be doing an in class writing on the book on the first full day of classes as school begins.

Kazuo Ishiguro (information adapted from: <https://www.academyofachievement.org/Kazuo-Ishiguro> ----- <https://www.Nobelprize.org> ----- <https://www.TheParisReview.org>)

Kazuo Ishiguro, a novelist, screenwriter, and musician, was born on November 8, 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan. His mother had survived the atomic bomb attack on the city that ended World War II; his father had spent the war years in Shanghai. When Kazuo was five years old, his father, an oceanographer, accepted an invitation from the British government to conduct research in England. Kazuo did not see the country of his birth again until his mid-30s.

In the late 1970s, Ishiguro graduated in English and Philosophy at the University of Kent, and then went on to study Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, England. Kazuo Ishiguro has been a full-time author ever since his first book, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982). Both his first novel and the subsequent one, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) take place in Nagasaki a few years after the Second World War. Ishiguro won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2017. He currently lives in West London. Kazuo Ishiguro is known for his reserved and private nature, which is reflected in his personal life. He has been married to his wife, Lorna MacDougall, since 1986, and they have a daughter, Naomi Ishiguro who is also a published writer.

Klara and the Sun was published in 2022. The story is narrated by Klara, an AF (Artificial Friend) who is purchased by Chrissie Arthur to be a companion for her fourteen-year-old daughter, Josie. Klara is a solar-powered robot who perceives the sun as a source of “nourishment”, healing, vitality, and hope.

(Please note: we don’t want to give away too much of the plot – as it is very intriguing with a rather mind-blowing situation towards the end of the book – we believe this book will result in great class discussions about very relevant societal issues 😊😊)

“One of the things that’s interested me always is how we live in small worlds and big worlds at the same time: that we have a personal arena in which we have to try and find fulfilment and love, but that inevitably intersects with a larger world, where politics, or even dystopian universes, can prevail. So I think I’ve always been interested in that. We live in small worlds and big worlds at the same time and we can’t ... forget one or the other”. (Ishiguro – from: <https://theconversation.com>)

Vocabulary (some from: <https://www.harvardreview.org>----

<https://www.nytimes.com>---- *Klara and the Sun*)

Oblongs – Tablets/laptops

Boxes – Pixels

Lifted – children who have been genetically modified

Unlifted – children who have not been genetically modified

Obsolescence -no longer needed/outdates

Substituted – replaced by AI

AF – Artificial Friend

Anthropomorphized – attributing human qualities/personality to non-human things (similar to personification)

Humanoid – A non-human entity with human form or characteristics

Guiding Questions (again – students are not writing these out- although taking notes/annotating while reading would be helpful for comprehension and analysis for the in class writing on the first full class day)

- What does it mean to be human? What qualities/characteristics does one have to have to be perceived as a human?
- Kazuo Ishiguro, while being interviewed by Ari Sharpio (NRP broadcaster), calls Klara a “tabula rasa” (a blank slate, having absolutely no experience... or as philosopher John Locke theorized: *“...individuals are not born with innate ideas or knowledge. Instead, all knowledge and understanding develop from experience and sensory perception. He argued that the mind at birth is like an empty sheet of paper, waiting to be filled through interaction with the world”*. (from: <https://philosophiesoflife.org>) --- Keeping these perceptions in mind, trace the ways in which Klara is able to move from tabula rasa to self-awareness and a sense of identity throughout the novel.
- Published in 2022, the novel explores the potential roles of AI society. Reflect on the multiple perspectives the book creates in relationship to the effects AI can have on society (in other words- what do different people in the book think about AI)
- In thinking about the “portrait” of Josie her mother has “commissioned”, analyze what this type of technology could have on individuals in society...and how Chrissie’s “plan” delves deeply into ethical/moral consideration about the ways the text deals with the growing schism between the natural world and the technological world.
- Multiple Perspectives: Why would some people say Klara is “human” – why would some people say Klara is not human – what do you think?