

# THE REMAINS OF THE DAY BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

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WINNER OF THE BOOKER PRIZE



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AUTHOR OF NEVER LET ME GO



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## Amazon.com Review

The novel's narrator, Stevens, is a perfect English butler who tries to give his narrow existence form and meaning through the self-effacing, almost mystical practice of his profession. In a career that spans the second World War, Stevens is oblivious of the real life that goes on around him -- oblivious, for instance, of the fact that his aristocrat employer is a Nazi sympathizer. Still, there are even larger matters at stake in this heartbreaking, pitch-perfect novel -- namely, Stevens' own ability to allow some bit of life-affirming love into his tightly repressed existence.

## From Publishers Weekly

Greeted with high praise in England, where it seems certain to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize, Ishiguro's third novel (after *An Artist of the Floating World*) is a tour de force-- both a compelling psychological study and a portrait of a vanished social order. Stevens, an elderly butler who has spent 30 years in the service of Lord Darlington, ruminates on the past and inadvertently slackens his rigid grip on his emotions to confront the central issues of his life. Glacially reserved, snobbish and humorless, Stevens has devoted his life to his concept of duty and responsibility, hoping to reach the pinnacle of his profession through totally selfless dedication and a ruthless suppression of sentiment. Having made a virtue of stoic dignity, he is proud of his impassive response to his father's death and his "correct" behavior with the spunky former housekeeper, Miss Kenton. Ishiguro builds Stevens's character with precisely controlled details, creating irony as the butler unwittingly reveals his pathetic self-deception. In the poignant denouement, Stevens belatedly realizes that he has wasted his life in blind service to a foolish man and that he has never discovered "the key to human warmth." While it is not likely to provoke the same shocks of recognition as it did in Britain, this insightful, often humorous and moving novel should significantly enhance Ishiguro's reputation here.

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## Review

"An intricate and dazzling novel." —The New York Times

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# THE REMAINS OF THE DAY BY KAZUO ISHIGURO PDF

The Remains of the Day is a profoundly compelling portrait of the perfect English butler and of his fading, insular world postwar England. At the end of his three decades of service at Darlington Hall, Stevens embarks on a country drive, during which he looks back over his career to reassure himself that he has served humanity by serving "a great gentleman." But lurking in his memory are doubts about the true nature of Lord Darlington's "greatness" and graver doubts about his own faith in the man he served.

A tragic, spiritual portrait of a perfect English butler and his reaction to his fading insular world in post-war England. A wonderful, wonderful book.

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- Brand: Vintage International
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- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .60" w x 5.20" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 245 pages

## Features

- Great product!

## Amazon.com Review

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A true tour de force

By Diane Schirf

The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro. Highly recommended.

It's difficult to believe how much Kazuo Ishiguro packed into this short (by today's standards), highly praised novel -- a lifetime of work and relationships, the realization of inescapable regret, and the hope it is not too late to join the rest of humanity.

Stevens is a butler for an English house that is no longer great, nor is it owned by the family for which it is named. His postwar employer is, instead, an American named Farraday; as a stranger will point out to him later, "An American? Well, they're the only ones can afford it now." Farraday "affords" Darlington Hall by shutting much of the house down and using a reduced staff, which Stevens can understand, as the staff that would be available would not be up to his own high standards. When he receives a sad, lonely letter from Darlington's former housekeeper, Miss Kenton (now Mrs. Benn), and later is told by Farraday that he can borrow his employer's car for a vacation on the road, he weighs the opportunity and decides to take it for "professional reasons" -- to see if he can lure back the highly qualified Miss Kenton to her former position. During the brief journey, he spends much of his time contemplating what "dignity" in his profession means -- and whether he lived up to it. After a plethora of recollections about the late Lord Darlington during the prewar years and after his meeting with Miss Kenton, Stevens comes to two great understandings: he did not serve a great man as he thought he had, and, in doing so, he had missed a chance for love and fulfillment. His devotion to Lord Darlington has betrayed him, personally and professionally. "I can't even say I made my own mistakes," he laments. "Really -- one has to say -- what dignity is there in that?"

This revelation does not come quickly or easily to either Stevens or the reader. Each anecdote that Stevens recalls to illustrate a point he wishes to make to himself -- the definition of dignity, how he upheld dignity by serving his employer while his own father lay dying -- subtly reveals how much he has shut himself down emotionally in order to serve. With each story, it becomes clearer that Lord Darlington is an easily manipulated man, out of his league in world politics but insistent on playing the role of peacemaker -- even when it is no longer appropriate or wise. When his friendship with a woman leads him to firing two Jewish maids, it foreshadows his attempts to influence the British government into appeasing Hitler and the Nazis at any cost. He goes so far as to say that the U.K. should perhaps follow Germany's lead. "Germany and Italy

have set their houses in order by acting . . . See what strong leadership can do if it's allowed to act. None of this universal suffrage nonsense." Stevens unwittingly proves Lord Darlington's point for him -- he trusts Lord Darlington's judgment as blindly as any German trusted Hitler's, believing that "people like him" are too ignorant to make the decisions that must be made and following the great man contentedly -- and thus making a bad decision.

When it comes to Miss Kenton, here too his perception is kept in check by his need for professionalism and dignity. His repeated emphasis on their "professional" relationship and his desire to reconnect with her as a "professional" only highlight the extent to which he will go to suppress his real feelings -- and the very real possibilities that existed.

In life and love, Stevens realises he has been avoiding both. In the end, however, there is hope. After sending Miss Kenton home, back to her husband, Stevens turns to "bantering"; that is, engaging with people without resorting to pre-programmed professional phrases --in short, truly interacting with his fellow humans. "After all, when one thinks about it, it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in -- particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth." Indeed it does.

One doesn't have to be a butler in service to others to use the remains of his or her own day to look back and appraise where one went wrong and where there is still room for hope. This is an incredible journey toward understanding, written in a concise, spare manner that fits perfectly with the character of Stevens. Few writers have the gift of saying so much in so little space. More should learn it.

Diane L. Schirf, 18 November 2001.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

First Ishiguro - not disappointed at all

By Chetan

Was my first Ishiguro - and I must say I was impressed. At first, I thought it was another slow paced smoke monster story (not really a monster, a secret) but as the story progressed, I was hooked. Impressive writing, and beautiful dissection of the central character's psyche.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Remains of the Day

By Linda J. Thwing

Required reading for my son for high school. We enjoyed discussing the story of a man who lived such a dignified life of service but nearing the end of his life, questioned whether he had "missed the mark" in the choice he had made.

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