

Klara and the Sun



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KAZUO ISHIGURO

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Japan but moved to England as a child and did not return to his home country for 30 years. In spite of this, his first two novels (*A Pale View of the Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*) are set in Japan—Ishiguro drew on the experiences of his Japanese-speaking parents but has claimed to be more inspired by British and European authors such as Marcel Proust (*In Search of Lost Time*). In 1986, Ishiguro met his future wife, Lorna MacDougall, while working at a homelessness charity, and the two have lived together in London ever since. Though Ishiguro’s earliest novels were well reviewed, it’s arguable that his breakthrough was *The Remains of The Day* (1989), which follows a road trip by an English butler in the aftermath of World War II and was later adapted into a film. Ishiguro is known for writing in many different genres: perhaps his best-known novel today is the science fiction story *Never Let Me Go* (2005), but he has also written in the mystery genre (*When We Were Orphans*, 2000) and fantasy (*The Buried Giant*, 2015). In 2017, Kazuo Ishiguro received the Nobel Prize for literature. *Klara and the Sun* (2021) was Ishiguro’s first novel since winning the award.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Klara and the Sun was published in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted life around the world, starting particularly in early 2020. The isolation of many of the characters in *Klara and the Sun*, especially the way that Josie gets her education almost exclusively from tutors in remote locations, reflects the quarantine conditions of the pandemic, even though the novel itself isn’t set during a pandemic. *Klara and the Sun* is also a satire of the contemporary college admissions process. It imagines a future where colleges will only accept students who have been “lifted” (meaning they have undergone a dangerous medical procedure that will, allegedly, make them smarter), which is meant to be a parody of all the tests, applications, and other requirements students must meet in order to be accepted for college in the 21st century.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Kazuo Ishiguro has claimed that his novels are often variations on the same themes. *Klara and the Sun* is perhaps most similar to *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ishiguro’s other science fiction novel. *Never Let Me Go* is not about robots, but it involves humans who only live for the benefit of other more-privileged humans, and so their status is very similar to Klara’s. Ishiguro

has also cited the influence of Fyodor Dostoevsky (*Crime and Punishment*) and Marcel Proust (*In Search of Lost Time*) on his own books. Some literary critics compared *Klara and the Sun* to the android love story *Machines Like Me* (2019), a novel by Ian McEwan, another famous British novelist of the 20th and 21st century.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Klara and the Sun
- **When Written:** Between 2015 and 2021
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** March 5, 2021
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Science Fiction
- **Setting:** An unspecified part of the future United States
- **Climax:** The Sun seems to cure Josie of her illness.
- **Antagonist:** Josie’s chronic illness
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Klara and the Son. After winning the Nobel Prize, the first person Kazuo Ishiguro called was his mother, who was 91 at the time.

Another Side of Kazuo Ishiguro. Ishiguro is a noted music fan, particularly of Bob Dylan and of jazz music. He has said that his “desert island disc” would be a rendition of the jazz standard “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” by Stacey Kent.



PLOT SUMMARY

Klara, the narrator of the novel, is an Artificial Friend (AF), which means that she’s a special type of solar-powered robot that is sold to help assist with raising children. She begins her life in a store run by a human woman that she calls Manager. The store is located in a city somewhere in the United States in the near future. Though Klara is not the most advanced model of robot in the store, Manager notices that Klara is very observant. In particular, Klara likes looking out the window onto the street, where she can see the people outside in the **Sun**. She is dismayed whenever she sees the **Cootings Machine**, a construction vehicle that spews pollution that blocks the Sun. One day, Klara witnesses a man on the street—whom she calls Beggar Man—stop moving. He seems to be dead, but he’s resurrected the next morning when the Sun comes out. Watching this happen convinces Klara that the Sun

has the ability to heal and nourish humans.

Klara is one of the last robots of her kind to be sold at the store. Eventually, however, she is purchased by a 14-year-old girl named Josie and her mom, whom Klara refers to as the Mother. Josie promises to buy Klara the day they meet, but it takes a long time until that day actually comes because Josie is delayed by her chronic illness.

Josie's house is located in a more remote, rural area. At Josie's house, Klara is happy to learn more about Josie and how she can be a good Artificial Friend. One of the most important people in Josie's life is Rick, her neighbor and best friend. Rick has an aptitude for engineering, and he and Josie plan on spending the rest of their lives together. This plan faces one significant obstacle, however: Josie has been "lifted" and Rick hasn't. Lifting is a procedure that supposedly makes children smarter and better prepared for the future, but it also carries potentially deadly side effects—lifting is the cause of Josie's chronic illness. Because Rick hasn't been lifted, most colleges won't accept him, and so it is likely that he and Josie will have to be apart when Josie goes to college.

As Klara spends more time with her new family, the Mother asks Klara to learn as much as she can about Josie and even to try imitating her sometimes. Klara slowly learns that Josie is having a "portrait" made of her by an eccentric man named Mr. Capaldi. As it turns out, the portrait is not a painting but a near-exact AF replica of Josie's body. Klara thinks perhaps she is intended to train the new Josie if the old Josie should ever die, but she soon learns that she has been chosen for her powers of observation to *become* Josie and to try to "continue" her as if the real Josie were still alive. Josie's dad, the Father, objects to this plan, and even the Mother has doubts about whether she could ever accept a new version of Josie. Klara determines to do everything she can so that nothing bad ever happens to the original Josie.

Klara remembers how the Sun seemed to help Beggar Man, and so she calls on the Sun to help Josie get better. With Rick's help, she goes to McBain's barn, which is behind Josie's house and which, from the vantage point of Josie's window, looks like it's located at the place where the Sun sets on the horizon. Klara promises the Sun that Josie and Rick have a true love and that they deserve the Sun's help. She also promises that she will do something to please the Sun. When she's in the city, she enlists the help of the Father (who is an engineer) to destroy a Cootings Machine, hoping that if she removes this source of pollution, the Sun will be happy. Klara is disappointed, however, to see that as they leave the city, the destroyed Cootings Machine has simply been replaced by a newer, bigger one.

Nevertheless, Klara continues to trust the Sun. One morning, her faith is seemingly rewarded. Though Josie's health initially takes a turn for the worse, on one sunny morning, Josie begins making a miraculous recovery. Even Rick, who is more skeptical than Klara about the Sun's power, later mentions that it really

seems like Josie's recovery was related to that one sunny morning.

After Josie recovers, she begins to drift apart from both Klara and Rick, spending more time with other young people in her area who are also headed to college. Rick begins to make his own new friend group. When Josie leaves for college, she says goodbye to Klara for the last time.

Klara eventually ends up in the Yard, a place where other AFs go to have their "slow fade" at the end of their lifespans. Klara becomes immobile, and although people offer to move her closer to other AFs, she prefers to be alone so that she can organize her old memories. One day, she is visited by Manager, who sometimes stops by the yard to check for out-of-commission AFs that she once sold at her store. Klara tells Manager about the time when the Sun was kind to Josie, and Manager says she always knew that the Sun would be good to Klara.



CHARACTERS

Klara – Klara is an Artificial Friend (a type of robot) whom Josie and the Mother purchase. She is described as looking like a French woman. From the very beginning, when she is on display in the store run by Manager, Klara has surprisingly astute powers of observation. She is fascinated by the daily movements of the **Sun** (perhaps because she is solar powered), and she eventually develops superstitions about the Sun's ability to provide nourishment and healing. After being purchased, Klara does her best to learn how to be a good friend for Josie, who often needs supervision due to a chronic illness. As time passes, Klara learns that her goal is not only to assist Josie but in fact to be put into a new body and *become* Josie, should Josie die of her illness. Klara is willing to do this, but she maintains hope that perhaps Josie may one day be cured. In an attempt to cure Josie, Klara asks for help from Josie's friend Rick and tries to get the Sun to intervene on Josie's behalf. Klara even enlists the help of the Father to destroy a pollution-spewing construction vehicle called the **Cootings Machine**, believing that this will make the Sun happy. One sunny morning, Josie does start getting better, which seemingly confirms Klara's beliefs about the Sun. But Klara has a limited lifespan, and so shortly after Josie goes to college, Klara is left in a place called the Yard for her "slow fade," where she spends the rest of her days putting her old memories into order. As a character, Klara provides an outside perspective on humanity, showing how human actions look to a character who isn't human. At the same time, however, Klara seems to have many of the same thoughts and emotions as a human, raising questions about what it really means to be human.

Josie – At the beginning of the story, Josie is a 14-and-a-half-year-old girl who lives with her mom (the Mother) and their

housekeeper (Melania Housekeeper) in a nice home in a rural area of the United States. She sees Klara in a store that sells Artificial Friends (robot companions) and convinces her mom that Klara is the one they should buy. Josie walks with a noticeable limp and suffers from a mysterious chronic illness that comes and goes, causing periods of intense exhaustion. It is later revealed that Josie's illness is a result of her mom's decision to have her "lifted"—a mysterious procedure that is a prerequisite for most colleges and that is intended to make children smarter. Josie's best friend is her next-door neighbor, Rick, and they have a plan to spend the rest of their lives together. The problem with their plan, however, is that Rick hasn't been lifted, and so there's only one major college that will even consider his application. All of Josie's future plans are almost derailed when she has a particularly acute attack of her illness and seems likely to die. Ultimately, however, Josie makes a seemingly miraculous recovery (which Klara credits to the intervention of the **Sun**) and ends up going away to college. In the time before she leaves, Josie becomes more independent and spends less time with both Klara and Rick. The last time Josie sees Klara is right before she goes to college, at which point Klara is put in the Yard, a place for Artificial Friends to spend the last parts of their lives. Josie's story illustrates the transition from childhood to adulthood and how growing up can cause a person to change their values. She illustrates the advantages of a privileged life (since her family is richer than Rick's) but also shows how no amount of privilege is enough to stop external forces like disease.

The Mother – Josie's mom is called Chris (or Chrissie) by fellow humans, but she is always referred to by Klara as "the Mother." Throughout the story, the Mother's main goal is to provide the best possible life for Josie, but she often has disagreements with other characters like the Father, Melania Housekeeper, Rick, and even Josie herself about what is best for Josie. The Mother has been divorced for several years, and it is later revealed that she had another daughter named Sal who died at a young age of disease. This makes it particularly hard for the Mother to witness Josie's illness, especially since it was her choice to have Josie "lifted" (a process that prepares children for college but that apparently caused Josie's disease). In order to cope with the potential of losing Josie, the Mother takes Josie to Mr. Capaldi, telling Josie that Mr. Capaldi is making a "portrait," when in fact he's making an Artificial Friend in Josie's exact likeness. The plan is that if Josie dies, Klara will take over the consciousness of the Josie-like Artificial Friend and "continue" Josie, although at times the Mother is doubtful this plan will work. In the end, however, Josie survives, and the plan never takes effect. The Mother represents the difficulties of parenting, showing how challenging it can be to decide what's best for a child.

Rick – Rick is Josie's best friend and next-door neighbor. He and his mother, Miss Helen, are originally from Britain. Rick and

Josie spend a lot of time together and have a plan to be together for the rest of their lives. Josie introduces Klara to Rick shortly after purchasing Klara. The problem with Josie and Rick's plan to be together, however, is that Josie has been "lifted" (a special procedure that children undergo and that most colleges require) and Rick hasn't, meaning that unless Rick gets into one very selective school, he and Josie won't be able to go to college together. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Rick is unlifted and that he doesn't fit in with the other kids Josie knows, he is very intelligent and has a particular aptitude for building model drones. Sometimes, Rick and Josie fight, but they always make up. When Josie gets especially sick and seems likely to die, Klara asks the **Sun** for help, promising the Sun that the love between Rick and Josie is true and, therefore, that Josie is worth saving. Josie survives, but ultimately, she and Rick drift apart in the years right before college, as Josie spends more time with her college-bound friends. Rick demonstrates how sometimes intelligent people, particularly those who aren't wealthy, can be held back because they lack arbitrary credentials. He also represents how people change, and how the things people value in childhood are not necessarily the same as what they value as adults.

Melania Housekeeper – Melania Housekeeper is a housekeeper who lives with the Mother, Josie, and eventually Klara. English is not her first language, and she often speaks bluntly in ways that surprise Klara. Melania Housekeeper is especially wary around Klara at first, perhaps because she senses that a robot like Klara could soon make her own housekeeping job obsolete. Nevertheless, Melania Housekeeper learns to work with Klara, in part because she cares deeply about Josie and is even willing to contradict the Mother to help Josie, such as when she asks Klara to keep a close eye on the mysterious portrait-maker Mr. Capaldi. Melania Housekeeper shows the complicated relationship that household workers have with the people who employ them, providing a comparison with Klara, who is also a sort of domestic worker but who isn't human.

Manager – Manager is a human woman who runs a store in an unspecified American city that sells Artificial Friends (a type of robot), including Klara, Rosa, and Rex. Klara, Rosa, and Rex are all B2 AFs, but soon a new, more advanced line of AFs called B3s begin to fill the store. Manager is particularly interested in Klara because she realizes that Klara is one of the most observant AFs. After Klara is purchased by Josie and the Mother, Klara doesn't see Manager for a long time, but she meets Manager again near the end of her lifespan. Manager is kind to her and congratulates her on being a good AF. Just as Klara is a parent figure to Josie, Manager is a parent figure to Klara.

Beggar Man – Beggar Man is a man Klara watches through the window of the store run by Manager. Beggar Man seems to live on the street with his dog, and one day he stops moving, leading

Klara to wonder if he's dead. No one on the street does anything, but, on the next morning, Beggar Man gets up. Because it was a sunny morning when Beggar Man recovered, Klara believes it was **the Sun** that healed him (in part because she herself is solar powered). This incident inspires Klara to ask the Sun for help later, when she hopes to cure Josie from her life-threatening illness.

Miss Helen – Miss Helen is Rick's mother. She is known for speaking her mind, arguably too much. Rick often worries about her, and it is strongly implied that she is often drunk or otherwise impaired. Though she is not as wealthy as the Mother, she used to be popular when she was younger and had many men who were interested in her. One of her former lovers was Vance, who ended up in an influential position at one of the only colleges in the world that will consider accepting Rick. Despite her and Rick's attempts to charm Vance, Vance can't let go of the past and wants to humiliate Miss Helen for revenge. Miss Helen provides a contrast to the Mother (who provides more traditional stability for Josie than Miss Helen does for Rick), showing how the lives of children are affected by their parents.

The Father – The Father is Josie's father and the Mother's ex-husband. A talented engineer, he is still on speaking terms with the Mother, but they often disagree about what's best for Josie, particularly when it comes to the mysterious Mr. Capaldi, who wants to help the Mother create a portrait of Josie (the "portrait" is actually a robot clone) that can "continue" her if she ever dies. The father lives in an insular community that Miss Helen calls "fascistic," but the Father believes his community is simply preparing to defend itself from real threats. The nature of these threats is never specified, and many aspects of the Father's life remain mysterious, although it is implied that outside of the relatively comfortable area where Josie lives, many parts of world are more violent. The Father helps Klara destroy a **Cootings Machine** (which Klara hopes will please the **Sun** by reducing pollution). The Father's interest in engineering symbolically connects him to Josie's inventive friend Rick, and so the disintegration of the Mother and the Father's relationship foreshadows how Josie and Rick will both grow up to value different things in life.

Mr. Capaldi – Mr. Capaldi is a man who lives in the big city and has been hired by the Mother to make a "portrait" of Josie. In fact, however, the portrait is a lifelike Artificial Friend, and the plan is that Klara will learn how to be Josie, so that if Josie ever dies, Klara can inhabit the artificial Josie's body. Many characters, including the Father and Melania Housekeeper, distrust Mr. Capaldi and even suspect him of being a pervert. In the end, Mr. Capaldi does not seem to be a pervert, but in his quest to be at the forefront of Artificial Friend technology he arguably disregards many of the important ethical questions that arise when trying to create an artificial duplicate of a living human.

Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man – Coffee Cup Lady (named because she is the same shape as the coffee cups Klara sees in Manager's store) and Raincoat Man (named because he wears a raincoat) are two people that Klara watches through the store window. They are both older, and it appears that they suddenly reunite after many years of not seeing each other. Watching them reunite helps Klara learn more about human behavior.

Vance – Vance is an old lover of Miss Helen's who ends up holding an influential position at the college Atlas Brookings—the only school that considers accepting students (like Rick) who haven't been "lifted." Though Vance is impressed with Rick's drawings of drones and seems to genuinely admire Rick, he is still hung up on the past and mostly uses their meeting as a chance to go over old grievances with Miss Helen and try to humiliate her. Vance is not Rick's literal father (because he and Miss Helen had previously been out of contact for 27 years), but he embodies both the positive and the negative aspects of a father figure for Rick.

Sal – Sal is the Mother's daughter and Josie's sister who died of disease at a young age. It was a painful event for everyone, and this prompted the mother to have Mr. Capaldi create a replica of Sal as a sort of grieving doll (which Miss Helen happens to see through a window), although the doll was apparently discarded soon after. The experience with Sal is what prompts the Mother to hire Mr. Capaldi to create a "portrait" of Josie (which is not really a portrait, but in fact a lifelike replica that will be filled with Klara's consciousness if Josie ever dies).

Rosa – Rosa is a B2 Artificial Friend (a type of robot) from the same store as Klara and Rex. Rosa and Klara are often together, but Rosa doesn't seem to be as observant as Klara, suggesting that Klara's powers of observation are unusual. One day, Rosa is suddenly purchased, and Klara never sees her again, although Klara learns later from Manager that things didn't end up working out for Rosa and her new family.

Rex – Rex is a B2 Artificial Friend (a type of robot) from the same store as Klara and Rosa. Unlike Klara and Rosa, who are Girl AFs, Rex is a Boy AF, meaning he was designed to look like a male human. He is sold before Klara, and she never sees or hears from him again.

Mr. McBain – Mr. McBain, who never appears in the story, owns a barn near Josie's house that happens to be right where the **Sun** sets from Josie's window. The barn becomes a Stonehenge-like place of worship for Klara, and she goes there (with Rick's help) to ask the Sun to cure Josie.

TERMS

Lifting – "Lifting" is a fictional term that refers to a type of genetic enhancement performed in early childhood that allegedly makes children smarter but carries serious potential

side effects, including chronic illness and even death. The full mechanics of lifting are never described in depth—perhaps the most important detail is that most colleges will only accept children who have been lifted, meaning that the lifted **Josie** has many more options than the unlifted **Rick**, even though Rick is smart and could be a talented engineer. Lifting may have been inspired by a real-life process called CRISPR gene editing, which raises ethical questions about the possibility of modifying human embryos.

Artificial Friend – An Artificial Friend (AF) is a type of robot that is sold to act as something like a nanny to children. There are different models of AFs, with B3s being more advanced than B2s (like **Klara**). AFs are also gendered, with some being referred to as Girl AFs and others as Boy AFs.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



THE MEANING OF LOVE

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* is a story that looks at love from a variety of different perspectives. Perhaps the most difficult question

about love that the novel poses is about whether or not love itself is a strictly human experience. The “portrait” of Josie that Mr. Capaldi makes particularly emphasizes this question. The “portrait” is actually a robotic replica of Josie, and the Mother’s plan if Josie dies is for Klara—a robot—to “continue” Josie’s life by trying to literally become her. Many of the characters in the novel wonder how well this plan would work—is there something special about humans like Josie that makes them irreplaceable to the people who love them, or can a robotic clone inspire the same feelings of love? What’s in a person’s heart, and is it possible to replicate it? Ultimately, Josie survives, and these questions are never put to the test, but readers and characters alike are still left to grapple with them.

Klara, for her part, concludes at the end of the novel that there is something special about Josie—if not inside her, then in the love that other people have for her. In turn, *Klara and the Sun* reaffirms the idea that love is a central part of the human condition and, more specifically, something that ultimately makes life worth living. And yet, at the same time, if the thing that makes someone like Josie special is the love other people have for her, then it’s arguable that she really *could* be replaced by a convincing replica, as long as her loved ones were unable to discern a difference. In this way, the novel both celebrates the deeply human experience of being in love while also

challenging readers to consider the possibility that love itself can be created artificially—though it’s also reasonable to suggest that this only demonstrates love’s truly universal quality.



COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PROGRESS

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* is a science fiction novel that imagines how humanity might progress (or regress) in the near future. One of the most important futuristic concepts in the novel is a process called “lifting.” Although the precise mechanics of lifting are intentionally left vague, it seems to refer to a procedure that parents choose to have done on their children at a young age for the purpose of increasing their intelligence. Although lifting comes with benefits (it is a prerequisite for every elite college except one), it also comes with serious drawbacks. Josie, for example, contracts a grave illness as a result of being lifted, and she nearly dies from it. Although Josie tells her mom (the Mother) that she doesn’t regret being lifted, the benefits are unclear, since her neighbor Rick is also very intelligent even though he is “unlifted.” This suggests that perhaps the real benefit of lifting is its social value and how it helps preserve the illusion of meritocracy by giving wealthy students (Josie’s family is richer than Rick’s) a tangible way to “prove” their worth. Although lifting is a fictional concept, it has clear parallels to the pressures and challenges that real prospective college students face today, like applications and standardized tests—which may not be as deadly as Josie’s fictional illness but can nevertheless cause students to neglect their mental or even physical health. Ultimately, lifting represents not just the dangers of rigid educational systems but also how supposed progress often comes with serious side effects that must be weighed against the benefits.



FAITH AND HOPE

One of the unusual aspects of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* is that the most spiritual character is a robot. Although human characters occasionally say things like “Oh my God,” there’s nothing to suggest that any of them are particularly religious. By contrast, while Klara also has no traditional concepts of any god or religion, she treats the **Sun** as if it’s a personal god with the power to intervene in her life as well as human lives. When her human, Josie, gets very sick, Klara directly asks the Sun for help. She goes down to McBain’s barn (which is like a church or other place of worship) and forms a request to the Sun in her mind (which is like praying).

On the one hand, the book could be interpreted as a critique of faith, since Klara’s whole religion is based on a misunderstanding (because she is solar powered, she believes humans also get “nourishment” from the Sun). But faith in *Klara*

and the Sun is more complicated than that, and other aspects of it are portrayed positively. For example, Rick, who has an aptitude for engineering and rational thinking, supports Klara's rituals, even though he believes her actions are ultimately "AF superstition." When Josie does seem to make a miraculous recovery, it begins on a morning when the Sun shines brightly in her room. Even Rick admits that it really does seem as if Klara's "superstitions" have a certain kind of power, even if he doesn't necessarily believe the same things as Klara. Ultimately, *Klara and the Sun* demonstrates that perhaps the most important aspect of faith is how it gives individuals the hope to keep trying.



ENVIRONMENTALISM

One of the central paradoxes of *Klara and the Sun* is that, while Klara is a robot created by humans out of artificial materials, she gets nourishment from nature: in particular, the **Sun**. Even though Klara is a product of industrialized human society, then, she appreciates nature more than many of the humans around her. One of the recurring images in the book is the **Cootings Machine** (which seems to be some sort of construction vehicle that spews pollution while fixing roads). The humans that Klara observes all dislike the Cootings Machine, but none of them ever take action against it. This represents how many people have become complacent and have accepted the consequences of "progress," which in the case of the Cootings Machine means putting up with air and noise pollution in the name of construction and further industrialization. Klara, however, sees the Cootings Machine as an evil that shouldn't be tolerated, envisioning the conflict between the machine's pollution and the Sun in religious terms. Klara's outsider perspective helps illuminate how normal people have gotten used to ideas that, from the outside, seem intolerable. The fact that Klara takes action by destroying the Cootings Machine—and that people are happier when the machine goes away—suggests that there are ways to resist an environmentally destructive status quo. Nevertheless, the fact that the sabotaged Cootings Machine is soon replaced by an even *larger* Cootings Machine suggests that the challenges environmentalists face are formidable and can create a feeling of helplessness. While it is debatable whether Klara's destruction of the Cootings Machine actually caused the Sun to cure Josie of her illness, *Klara and the Sun* nevertheless implies that there are benefits to protecting the environment, even when strong opposition makes these efforts seem hopeless.



THE SUN

The Sun plays a god-like role in the novel, symbolizing both that people have lost touch with nature *and* the emotional power of having faith in something bigger than oneself. Klara is solar-powered, so the Sun actually *does* provide nourishment to her—she is sluggish when she doesn't get enough sunlight. Perhaps because of this, Klara seems to overestimate the effect the Sun has on humans, believing at one point that the Sun is responsible for bringing Beggar Man back from a near-death state. Klara develops rituals about how to communicate with the sun, further imbuing it with a divine kind of authority. She treats Mr. McBain's barn, where the Sun appears to set, as a place of worship, and she tries to communicate with the Sun in her mind, as if it's a deity that can read her thoughts. And though it is perhaps nothing more than a coincidence, Josie makes a miraculous recovery on a sunny morning after Klara has pleaded with the Sun to spare her. In a way, then, the novel invites readers to set aside their cynicism and, at the very least, consider the extent to which having faith in the Sun has given Klara not just a sense of hope and meaning, but agency, too. The Sun therefore comes to symbolize the power of believing in something bigger than oneself. And yet, none of the humans around Klara think about the Sun at all. As a result, the Sun's function in the novel also represents just how out of touch humans have become with the natural world.



THE COOTINGS MACHINE

The "Cootings Machine" is a name Klara gives to a construction vehicle that spews large clouds of smoke that ultimately block out **the Sun**. The machine itself represents the negative side effects of progress and how modern technology causes harm to the environment and is unpleasant for humans (since the people on the street all seem happier on the days when the Cootings Machine isn't around). Klara calls these vehicles Cootings Machines because Cootings is written on the side (presumably because it's the name of the manufacturer). Eventually, Klara gets the idea that she needs a favor from the Sun (in order to cure Josie's illness), and she decides that the best way to obtain a favor from the Sun is to do something that will please the Sun. She thus decides to destroy the Cootings Machine, which she does using the expertise of the Father. The results of the sabotage are mixed—on the one hand, the broken Cootings Machine is simply replaced by a larger one, but on the other hand, Klara gets her wish and Josie is cured. In turn, the Cootings Machine demonstrates that the fight for a better, less polluted environment is difficult but ultimately worthwhile.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.





QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Knopf edition of *Klara and the Sun* published in 2021.

Part One Quotes

When we were new, Rosa and I were mid-store, on the magazines table side, and could see through more than half of the window. So we were able to watch the outside—the office workers hurrying by, the taxis, the runners, the tourists, Beggar Man and his dog, the lower part of the RPO building.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Rosa, Josie, Manager, Beggar Man

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 1



Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the beginning of the novel. Part One (out of a total of six parts) is like a prologue to the rest of the book, since it is the only part that takes place in the store where Klara first comes from, before she is purchased by Josie's family. Although Klara is the narrator and she seems to think and act much like a human, she's actually an Artificial Friend, a type of solar-powered robot that is sold specifically to be a friend and caretaker to children (specifically rich children, since AFs are expensive).

Perhaps the defining feature of the store where Klara lives is that it's orderly, with all the objects stored in regular places. This seems to be the work of Manager, the woman who runs the store. Manager knows that, while AFs may seem like humans in many ways, they have a difficult time adjusting to change, particularly at the beginning of their lifespans before they've been out in the world. The outside world for Klara begins as something that she only sees out the window. It is only after spending some time in the store, watching the people outside like Beggar Man and the taxi drivers, that she begins to get a better understanding of humans.

“Klara, you're quite remarkable,” Manager said, keeping her voice soft so as not to disturb Rosa and the others. “You notice and absorb so much.” She shook her head as though in wonder. Then she said: “What you must understand is that we're a very special store. There are many children out there who would love to be able to choose you, choose Rosa, any one of you here. But it's not possible for them. You're beyond their reach. That's why they come to the window, to dream about having you. But then they get sad.”

Related Characters: Manager (speaker), Klara, Rosa, Josie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 10

Explanation and Analysis


This quote is said by Manager, a human woman who runs a shop in an unspecified American city that sells Artificial Friends like Klara and Rosa. Manager is not the manager's actual name, but because Klara is not a human, the language she uses in her narration has some quirks, including the capitalization of unusual words. In this case, the capitalization of Manager emphasizes the manager's importance as an authority figure in Klara's world, and it also illustrates how Klara has a limited perspective and perhaps doesn't realize that there are other managers out in the world.

Manager notices Klara's extraordinary powers of observation early and so she seems to treat Klara with special attention. In particular, Manager wants to help Klara better understand what humans are like. In this quote, Manager gives Klara a basic understanding of the concept of privilege. Many children want AFs but come from families that can't afford them, which is why the children outside the shop are sad, even though they like AFs.

The next morning, the grid went up and it was a most splendid day. The Sun was pouring his nourishment onto the street and into the buildings, and when I looked over to the spot where Beggar Man and the dog had died, I saw they weren't dead at all—that a special kind of nourishment from the Sun had saved them.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Beggar Man

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 


Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes a scene out the window of the store that Klara witnesses. A character identified only as Beggar Man lives on the street with his dog. One day, he seems to die and lies on the ground without moving. Some people notice, but no one does anything about it. The next morning, however, Klara is surprised to see that Beggar Man is sitting up again, having seemingly been resurrected by the nourishment of the Sun. This moment takes on special significance for Klara, who begins to attribute special powers to the Sun, eventually forming her own version of spirituality dedicated to the Sun. At first, it might seem like Klara is confused, because she is solar-powered and so she mistakenly assumes that humans are similarly helped by the Sun. As the story goes on, however, the boundary between what Klara believes and what the Sun actually does will become blurrier and blurrier. The Sun represents the natural world, something that many of the humans in the novel seem to have lost touch with.

“Well, Klara. Since you appear to know so much about it. Will you please reproduce for me Josie’s walk? Will you do that for me? Right now? My daughter’s walk?”

Related Characters: The Mother (speaker), Klara, Josie, Manager

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the Mother (Klara’s name for Josie’s mom), right when the Mother and Josie are deciding whether or not to buy Klara. Josie promised to buy Klara a long time ago, but her chronic illness prevented her from coming back for a while. If not for the intervention of Manager, Klara might have been purchased by another family before Josie could come back. Despite Josie’s persistence in trying to buy Klara, the Mother is more cautious. She asks Klara several questions about Josie to test Klara’s powers of observation, ending with the request that Klara mimic Josie’s walk. The whole exchange seems to suggest that the Mother is very concerned about her daughter, perhaps even overcautious. Her detailed interrogation of Klara could be explained simply because AFs are a major purchase and Josie requires special attention due to her chronic illness, but it also raises

questions that will keep coming up in the next part of the novel.

Part Two Quotes

“The kitchen was especially difficult to navigate because so many of its elements would change their relationships to one another moment by moment. I now appreciated how in the store—surely out of consideration for us—Manager had carefully kept all the items, even smaller ones like the bracelets or the silver earrings box, in their correct places.”

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Manager, Rosa, Rex, Josie, The Mother, Melania Housekeeper

Related Themes: 


Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from the very beginning of Part Two describes the house that Klara arrives at after being purchased from Manager’s store. The household consists of the Mother, Josie, and a domestic worker that Klara calls Melania Housekeeper. The main difference between the store and the house is that things in the store were very orderly, with everything always kept in its proper place. Perhaps this was standard for stores selling Artificial Friends, or perhaps this reflected the personality of Manager. But Klara has now left the orderly world of the store and must act as Artificial Friend for a real family, in an environment where things are unpredictable. Although Klara will become a caretaker for Josie, in many ways she is childlike herself, and the move from the store to the house represents a major coming-of-age moment for her. The uncertain layout of objects in the house reflects the uncertainties Klara will face as she navigates a new phase of her life.

“She had by now both hands on Rick’s left shoulder, resting her weight there as if trying to make him less tall and the two of them the same height. But Rick seemed not to mind her nearness—in fact he seemed to think it normal—and the idea occurred to me that perhaps, in his own way, this boy was as important to Josie as was the Mother; and that his aims and mine might in some ways be almost parallel, and that I should observe him carefully to understand how he belonged within the strange pattern of Josie’s life.”

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Rick, Josie

Related Themes: 



Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes a moment from when Klara first goes with Josie to meet Josie's next-door neighbor and best friend Rick. At first, Klara is confused, because she believes that as an AF, she is supposed to be Josie's best friend, but she soon learns that there are many different ways of being a friend. This passage depicts the emotional closeness of Josie and Rick by showing their physical closeness. Perhaps most interesting, however, is how Josie puts her weight on Rick to try to make him less tall and the same height as her. This foreshadows "the plan"—a loose idea that Josie and Rick have to be together forever by always being the same. What's unusual about this passage, however, is that Josie is depicted as pushing Rick down instead of pulling him up. Elsewhere in the book, characters in the book see Josie as metaphorically pulling Rick up, since she is likely headed to college and she is the only one who could convince Rick to also try to get into college, despite all the additional difficulties he would face. This passage, however, inverts things, suggesting that for all that Rick gains from following Josie, he also loses part of himself, raising questions about what Rick and Josie each gain or lose from their relationship.

“I suppose they have a point though,” he said. “I don't belong here. This is a meeting for lifted kids.”

Related Characters: Rick (speaker), Klara, Josie, The Mother

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is said by Rick to Klara, shortly after Josie's "interaction meeting." An interaction meeting is a gathering where one college-bound student hosts a small group of other college-bound students at their house, with the parents coming along too. Because Josie is essentially homeschooled remotely by distant professors, these formal social situations are considered part of her education. Perhaps because she isn't used to being around new people,

Josie is nervous and asks for Rick to come too, so that she'll have someone familiar around. What Josie doesn't realize (or perhaps doesn't want to acknowledge) is that Rick doesn't quite fit in with the crowd at an interaction meeting. Unlike all the students at an interaction meeting, Rick has not been "lifted." Lifting is a procedure children undergo at an early age in order to supposedly make them more intelligent—and so virtually all colleges except one require prospective students to be lifted. The divide in the novel between lifted and unlifted children symbolizes the divide in the real world between children who have the support and resources to get into college versus the children who don't receive the same level of support.

“Okay, Josie. So tell me how you'll get well.”

“There's special help coming. Something no one's thought of yet. Then I'll be well again.”

Related Characters: The Mother, Klara (speaker), Josie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, which out of context might seem to be a conversation between the Mother and Josie, is in fact a conversation between the Mother and Klara (with Klara pretending to be Josie). This passage occurs during a trip where the Mother takes Klara to Morgan's Falls and is the second time in the novel that the Mother asks Klara to impersonate Josie (the first time being in the shop when she asked Klara to replicate Josie's limp). Klara fully commits to the idea of being Josie, trying to talk just like her for a whole conversation. Things take a strange turn, however, when Klara, as Josie, suggests that she will be cured by a "special help" that no one has predicted. The statement is so strange that the Mother breaks out of character to see if Klara actually does know about any "special help" that could improve Josie's condition. On the one hand, the trip to Morgan's Falls seems to deepen the relationship between the Mother and Klara, but it also raises questions, putting the spotlight on the Mother's strange fixation with making Klara act like Josie.

Part Three Quotes

☞ “These folks surrounding her. Am I to assume they’re aliens? It almost looks like instead of a head, they have, well, a giant eyeball. I’m sorry if I have this all wrong.”

Related Characters: Rick (speaker), Josie, Klara, The Mother, Mr. Capaldi

Related Themes:   



Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

This quote by Rick is spoken to Josie while they’re playing “the bubble game.” The bubble game is when Rick and Josie collaborate to make a comic. Josie makes a drawing, leaving bubbles for dialogue, and Rick fills in the words. The game is clearly something they’ve been doing for a while, but as Klara watches them, the game begins to lose some of its childhood innocence. Like many visual artists, Josie begins to express some of her fears and anxieties through her drawings. Rick notices this and is often unsure how to write words in response. The turning point seems to be Josie’s drawing of the eyeball-head aliens. It’s not difficult to imagine what these aliens might represent: Josie is constantly being watched and examined, by her doctor, by the Mother, by her peers at the interaction meeting, and perhaps even by Mr. Capaldi, the mysterious portrait-maker who photographs different parts of her body. Josie’s growing ability to express herself represents a coming-of-age moment for her, but it also represents a source of tension between her and Rick because it makes her more self-conscious during the games they used to enjoy as children.

☞ “What I really wished to ask you, Klara. The real request, the deeper one. Would you ask Josie to try and persuade Rick? She’s the one person who might change his stance. He’s very stubborn, you see, and also—I suspect this—rather afraid. And who can blame him? He knows the world out there won’t be easy. But Josie’s the one capable of getting him to see this differently. Will you speak to her?”

Related Characters: Miss Helen (speaker), Klara, Rick, Josie, The Mother

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from Miss Helen (Rick’s mother) and is spoken to Klara in private. Miss Helen is very different from Josie’s mom (the Mother) and is much less inhibited—in fact, it’s implied that she might be drunk when she says the quote above. Despite the fact that Miss Helen causes a lot of stress for her son, she nevertheless understands many things about Rick. For example, Miss Helen has the self-awareness to know that the best way to convince Rick to apply to college is to get Josie to convince him, and the best way to get Josie to convince him is to have Klara ask Josie. Interestingly, Miss Helen is one of the few adult characters that Klara refers to by her first name without any mention of her job or role. This could reflect how, despite Miss Helen’s clear concern for Rick’s future, she also doesn’t fit society’s archetype of a mother as well as Josie’s mom, The Mother, fills that role.

☞ “Please make Josie better. Just as you did Beggar Man.”

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Josie, Rick, Beggar Man, Mr. McBain

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 163

Explanation and Analysis

This is a quote that Klara says in her head, believing that the Sun can hear her. It comes from a passage when, after getting some help from Rick, Klara goes down to Mr. McBain’s barn—the place where the Sun appears to set from Josie’s window. The ritual that Klara conducts there resembles prayer at a place of worship. In her head, Klara directly asks the Sun to help heal Josie. For evidence of the Sun’s healing power, Klara looks back to the event she witnessed through the store window where the Sun seemed to cure Beggar Man from a death-like state.

Klara envisions her relationship with the Sun as at least partly transactional. She believes that in order for the Sun to do a favor for her, she’ll have to do a favor for the Sun. When trying to think of a favor to please the Sun, Klara thinks back to the Cootings Machine, which seemed to displease the Sun so much with its pollution, and she makes a plan to destroy the Cootings Machine. This passage marks a turning point where Klara’s spirituality and relationship

with the Sun goes from a background element of her character to arguably the main thing motivating her, other than perhaps her devotion to Josie.

☝ “Don’t want to die, Mom. I don’t want that.”
 “It’s okay. Okay.” The Mother’s voice was soft, at just the same level mine had been.
 “I don’t want that, Mom.”
 “I know. I know. It’s okay.”

Related Characters: Josie, The Mother (speaker), Klara

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

This passage features a conversation between Josie and the Mother that happens in the middle of the night. Josie seems to have a sudden attack and asks Klara to call the Mother. Klara is concerned and asks if Josie is in pain, but Josie makes it clear that she’s not actually in pain. The whole experience confuses Klara, particularly because once the Mother actually arrives, she acts very similar to how Klara was acting. The Mother even uses the same tone of voice as Klara was using. It seems that, as a robot, Klara doesn’t have quite the same concept of mortality as Josie and the Mother, and so it seems that she doesn’t fully understand having a fear of death. This scene reveals that however Josie appears on the surface, there remains a part of her that is frightened by her disease and terrified about what the future might hold for her.

Part Four Quotes

☝ He clearly wished to greet Josie with an embrace, and looked around for somewhere to put down the paper bag, but Josie stepped forward and put her arms around him, paper bag and all. As he received her embrace, his gaze wandered around the room and fell on me. Then he looked away and closed his eyes, letting his cheek rest against the top of her head. They stayed like that for a time, keeping very still, not even rocking slowly the way the Mother and Josie did sometimes during their morning farewells.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), The Father, Josie, The Mother

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the first time that Klara meets Josie’s dad, referred to in the narration as the Father. Earlier, the Mother claimed that she and the Father were on good terms again, but it becomes clear soon after the Father’s appearance that things aren’t quite that simple. Despite being an adult, the Father is in some ways less socially skilled than his daughter, and it is Josie who initiates a hug between them. Josie’s warm greeting of the Father seems to suggest that she bears no bad feelings toward him, even though it’s implied that he isn’t around very often.

It’s interesting that after seeing Klara for the first time, the Father looks away and closes his eyes. This seems to reflect the Father’s tendency to avoid difficult topics. For the Father, Klara could represent a variety of things, including perhaps a reminder of Josie’s illness, since one of Klara’s main duties is to watch over Josie’s health. In a book full of window imagery, the Father’s initial tendency to look away is a noteworthy part of his character.

☝ I turned the corner of the L and saw Josie there, suspended in the air. She wasn’t very high—her feet were at the height of my shoulders—but because she was leaning forward, arms outstretched, fingers spread, she seemed to be frozen in the act of falling. Little beams illuminated her from various angles, forbidding her any refuge. Her face was very like that of the real Josie, but because there was at the eyes no kind smile, the upward curve of her lips gave her an expression I’d never seen before. The face looked disappointed and afraid.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Josie, Mr. Capaldi, The Father, The Mother

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 201

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes a moment at the “portrait” maker Mr. Capaldi’s place in the city, where Klara is sneaking around and comes across an Artificial Friend replica of Josie. By this point in the story, there have been several strong hints that the Mother’s business with Mr. Capaldi might have something to do with preparing for life after



Josie's death. Klara herself reveals that she figured out the mother's plan a while ago, although she does not reveal this in the narration until after the fact.

The description of the AF replica of Josie seems to suggest that, despite the amazing power of technology, it still is not possible to replicate a human exactly. There are minor flaws in the replica Josie, such as her facial expression, which Klara is particularly sensitive to, given her superhuman powers of observation. Ultimately, this passage suggests that while technology can come close to replicating humanity, it will never—at least not in the foreseeable future—be able to fully recreate a unique individual.

“You know, Klara. I don't even know what this is about. But I want what's best for Josie. Exactly the same as you. So I'm willing to grasp at any chance that comes our way.”
I turned to him with a smile and nodded. “Yes,” I said. “Then let's try.”

Related Characters: The Father, Klara (speaker), Josie

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 224



Explanation and Analysis

This quote, spoken by the Father to Klara, marks a turning point in the relationship between the two characters. At first, the Father is hesitant to even look at Klara, perhaps afraid of the future that AFs like her represent, or perhaps even prejudiced against AFs like some other characters in the book. But after spending time with Klara, he learns that, even though Klara isn't quite human, she nevertheless genuinely cares about Josie's well-being.

Klara enlists the Father's help because he's an engineer who can help her destroy the pollution-spewing Cootings Machine. Klara has promised to destroy the machine during one of her prayer-like conversations with the Sun, believing that her good deed for the Sun will convince the Sun to help cure Josie's illness. As it turns out, destroying the Cootings Machine will involve Klara giving up some fluid from her own head, potentially damaging Klara's cognition. Klara is willing to give up a part of herself for Josie, suggesting that love and sacrifice are such universal concepts that they transcend humanity itself, applying even to artificial intelligences like Klara.

“Now Rick. You said just now you're not seeking favoritism. Then let me ask you this. If that is really the case, *then why am I sitting in front of you now?*”

Related Characters: Vance (speaker), Rick, Miss Helen, Klara

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 246

Explanation and Analysis



This quote, spoken by the college administrator Vance to Rick, comes during their meeting. Miss Helen describes Vance as an old flame of hers from over two decades ago, and she contacts him again with the hope of getting Rick into Atlas Brookings, the only college that will accept unlifted students like him. At first, Rick's interview with Vance seems to go well, with Rick easily answering all the questions Vance comes up with. With the quote above, however, Vance's mood takes a turn and seemingly becomes more hostile. It is unclear whether something sets Vance off or whether it was always his plan to become more hostile, but in any case, it soon becomes clear that this meeting between Rick and Vance is really about the old relationship between Vance and Miss Helen.

Vance feels slighted by Miss Helen and recounts all the little ways that she did him wrong when they were together—despite the fact that all of these events happened almost three decades ago. It becomes clear that Miss Helen was, and perhaps still is, a thoughtless person sometimes, but what becomes even clearer is that Vance is a petty man who can't let go of the past. What's particularly striking about Vance's pettiness is that he's come so far in the years since he knew Helen, achieving a powerful position at a respected college, but he still gets worked up over perceived injustices from his youth. One of the recurring themes in *Klara and the Sun* is how modern education systems fail to see the value of unconventionally intelligent children like Rick, and this passage furthers that theme by showing how the people in power in education sometimes fail to live up to the high ideals they supposedly represent.

Its body was a different shade of yellow, its dimensions a little greater—and its ability to create Pollution more than a match for the first Cootings Machine.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 258

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the moment when Klara is in the car being driven out of the city and she notices that the Cootings Machine she destroyed has been replaced by an even bigger Cootings Machine. The moment is disappointing for Klara because she believed that destroying the Cootings Machine would please the Sun by getting rid of pollution, but in fact, it has only increased pollution by bringing in a larger machine. Though Klara is naturally hopeful, even she begins to doubt if the Sun will help Josie, since Klara failed to give the Sun what she promised.



Environmentalism is a recurring theme in *Klara and the Sun*, and one of the central ideas is that technology and “progress” often come with serious side effects to the environment that hurt humanity’s quality of life rather than helping it. As a construction vehicle, the Cootings Machine embodies how humanity’s spectacular creations can come with a heavy environmental cost. Klara, an idealist, is crushed to learn that destroying one Cootings Machine just means that it will be replaced with an even bigger one. Her experience reflects the experience of many environmental activists in the real world, where victories are often overshadowed by the sheer scale of pollution. Nevertheless, Klara eventually regains her hope, and the book’s overall message about the environment is not as pessimistic as it might seem in this specific passage.

Part Five Quotes

☝ “You must tell me if the love between Rick and Josie is genuine, if it’s a true and lasting one. I must know this. Because if the answer is yes, then I’ll have something to bargain with, regardless of what occurred in the city. So please think carefully Rick, and tell me the truth.”

“I don’t need to think. Josie and I grew up together and we’re part of each other. And we’ve got our plan. So of course our love’s genuine and forever. And it won’t make any difference to us who’s been lifted and who hasn’t. That’s your answer, Klara, and there won’t be any other.”

Related Characters: Klara, Rick (speaker), Josie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 266


Explanation and Analysis

This conversation between Klara and Josie occurs when Josie is so sick that she is barely responsive. Everyone believes Josie will die soon, except for Klara, who maintains her faith in the power of the Sun to intervene. Because Klara believes that she failed to please the Sun by destroying the Cootings Machine (since the Cootings Machine was just replaced by a bigger one), she now believes that she needs to find a new way to bargain with the Sun to help Josie. The solution she arrives at is to prove to the Sun that Josie and Rick’s love is true and therefore worth protecting. This focus on true love instead of sacrifice follows the logic of a fairy tale more than a religion, showing how Klara’s spirituality is evolving and not necessarily tied to any particular human beliefs. It also shows how some human values like true love are so universal that even robots can understand them, in their own way.

☝ But I’m remembering how delighted you were on that day Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man found each other again. You were so delighted and couldn’t help showing it. So I know just how much it matters to you that people who love one another are brought together, even after many years.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man, Beggar Man, Rick, Josie

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 271



Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Klara recalls a moment from back when she was in the shop (in Part One) and she witnessed two anonymous characters that she calls Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man through the window. As with Beggar Man, Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man taught Klara an important lesson that fundamentally changed how she viewed humans. In their case, Coffee Cup Lady (named because her body shape resembled the coffee cups in the store) and Raincoat Man (named because he wore a raincoat) were apparently two people who once loved each other but hadn’t seen each other for a long time, leading to a bittersweet reunion.

Now, Klara looks back on the experience of witnessing Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man in order to prove that the Sun cares about love. When Klara says the Sun was happy on that day of their reunion, she means that it was shining brightly. In Klara's spirituality, the things that the Sun values are similar to the things Klara herself values, although there is also an element of the Sun's actions that remains unknown to Klara, who despite all her faith is uncertain whether the Sun will intervene to help Josie. The story of Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man shows how a person (or in this case, a robot) can have their values shaped by what they witness in the world around them.

“And there was more. On this question of being lifted. She wants you to know she wouldn't wish it any other way. If she had the power to do it again, and this time it was up to her, she says she'd do exactly what you did and you'll always be the best mother she could have.”

Related Characters: Rick (speaker), The Mother, Josie, Klara, Miss Helen, Vance

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 277

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Rick to the Mother. The Mother has just started an angry tirade against Rick, essentially suggesting that because he wasn't lifted, his life will never be worth as much as Josie's, even if Josie does die at a young age. Rick, who has experience dealing with his own mother's moods, seems to realize that the Mother is trying to deal with her own grief and potential guilt over the role she played in having Josie lifted. Instead of responding angrily to the Mother, he tells her a story about how Josie wanted him to deliver a message to the Mother at the right time. In her message, Josie says that she agrees with all of the Mother's decisions and that she would do the same thing herself.

There are several reasons to doubt whether Rick's story is true. First, Josie has been unresponsive lately, unable to talk or think clearly; second, Rick has extensive experience making up Josie's words for her, as demonstrated in the “bubble game” that they both played together; and third, Rick is always eager to please adults and say what they want to hear, from his mother (Miss Helen) to the college administrator Vance. It's also unclear whether the Mother believes Rick's story—she is so shocked by it that she can

barely respond. Rick's story about Josie's message raises important questions about the truth in the novel, asking how important literal truth is and asking to what extent it's even possible to determine if something is really true.

“The Sun was illuminating her, and the entire bed, in a ferocious half-disc of orange, and the Mother, standing closest to the bed, was having to raise her hands to her face.”

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Josie, The Mother, Melania Housekeeper, Rick

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 279

Explanation and Analysis



This passage describes the climax of the story, where Josie is finally healed from her chronic illness, seemingly by the intervention of the Sun, which shines brightly through her window. Although it was unclear for much of the story whether Klara's beliefs in the Sun's power had any basis in reality or whether she was simply delusional, this passage seems to confirm Klara's beliefs. Nevertheless, some ambiguity remains because the story is narrated from Klara's perspective and presumably informed by her beliefs.


While it is possible to question whether Josie really made such a miraculous recovery, given Klara's bias as a narrator, it ultimately makes more sense to treat the events at face value. *Klara and the Sun* is a novel about both the power of love and the power of nature, and so it makes sense that these two forces would combine to create a miraculous event at the climax—regardless of whether the event is a “real” miracle or not. Moreover, as Part Six of the book makes clear, even a seeming miracle like Josie's recovery doesn't automatically lead to happily ever after, and the aftermath of Josie's recovery ends up being more complicated than Klara envisioned.

Part Six Quotes

“But now we're no longer kids, we have to wish each other the best and go our different ways. It couldn't have worked out, me going to college, trying to compete with all those lifted kids. I've got my own plans now, and that's how it should be. But that was no lie, Klara. And in a funny way, it still isn't a lie now.”

Related Characters: Rick (speaker), Klara, Josie

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 



Page Number: 288

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is said from Rick to Klara. Sometime long after Josie's recovery from her illness, when Rick and Josie begin to drift apart, Klara worries for Josie's health because she believes that the Sun only helped her because Klara assured the Sun that Josie and Rick's love was true. Rick reassures Klara that Rick and Josie's love *is* true, even if it doesn't exist in the same form as it used to. Though Josie and Rick might not see each other again after Josie goes to college, their love was special while it lasted, and it will forever be a part of both of their lives. One of the major ideas in *Klara and the Sun*—as well as many of author Kazuo Ishiguro's other works—is that there is something valuable and permanent about love, even when it lasts for a short period of time. Humans live fragile and short lives, but they are connected by values that stretch back to before the beginning of history.

☞ “Klara deserves better. She deserves her slow fade.”

Related Characters: The Mother (speaker), Klara, Mr. Capaldi, Josie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 294

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by the Mother to Mr. Capaldi, who makes a surprising reappearance in the novel after it turns out that his help will no longer be needed to “continue” Josie (since she survives her illness). This passage reveals more about Mr. Capaldi as a character. As it turns out, he's not just a businessman but something of a utopian who believes that Artificial Friends have the potential to improve human society but that humans simply don't understand them well enough yet to see the benefits. Mr. Capaldi suggests that the best way to get people to understand the inner workings of an AF is to open one up for the world to see. Essentially, he is asking to turn Klara into a science experiment or museum piece, potentially ending her consciousness in the process. The Mother objects to this

strongly, saying that Klara deserves her “slow fade” (which is apparently the equivalent of retirement for AFs).

The conversation between Mr. Capaldi and the Mother is interesting because despite Mr. Capaldi's ideals and ambitions for the future of AFs as a whole, he lacks the empathy to consider the ethics of what's best for an individual AF like Klara. In this way, Mr. Capaldi embodies the flaws of many technology advocates, showing how big dreams for the future can cause people to lose sight of basic empathy and ethics.

☞ Around the same time, a kind yardman stopped in front of me and told me there were three AFs on the South Side, and two in the Ring. If I wished, he said, he could transport me to one or the other of these areas. But I told him I was content with my special spot, and he nodded and went on his way.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 299

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Klara describes the beginning of her “slow fade,” when she has been left in the Yard, a place where AFs are left to live out the remainder of their days after they have ceased to be useful to the families that purchase them. Although Klara was social with the other AFs during her earlier days in the store, by the end of the novel she has developed a preference to be alone with her memories. The situation in the Yard, where AFs are often immobile, with failing frames, perhaps intentionally evokes a nursing home, where humans would spend their final days in a similar manner to these AFs.



Klara seems happy to be alone with her memories, even though she has arguably been abandoned by Josie and the Mother after all her years of faithful service. The novel questions the ethics of the situation without providing an easy answer: Are AFs ethical as long as they feel happy about their situations as Klara does, or is it cruel to create sentient beings for the benefit of humans, then abandon them after they cease to be useful? The question could even be applied to humans themselves, who often spend most of their lives working, only to be abandoned by society when they can't work anymore. Although *Klara and the Sun* is a novel about the future and a robot, like most science fiction, the ethical questions it raises all relate back to the world

today.

●● When she was mid-distance, she stopped and turned, and I thought she might look back one last time at me. But she was gazing at the far distance, in the direction of the construction crane on the horizon. Then she continued to walk away.

Related Characters: Klara (speaker), Manager

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 303

Explanation and Analysis

This passage is the last few lines of the book. In it, Klara watches Manager walking away from her in the Yard. Manager has not been in the novel since Part One, and it seems that shortly after Klara was purchased, the store where she used to live was replaced by a new business.

Manager seems to have gotten out of the AF business—in fact, Manager hints during her conversation with Klara that AFs in general have fallen out of fashion. Nevertheless, Manager keeps coming back to the Yard to check for old AFs that she sold.

Perhaps Manager feels attached to the old AFs as if they were her old friends, and perhaps she is also unwilling to let go of the utopian future that the AFs seemed to represent. Nevertheless, when Manager leaves Klara, she doesn't turn back around, but instead looks up at a construction crane on the horizon. This suggests that perhaps Manager is ultimately looking to the future, ready to leave behind the past the AFs like Klara represent, however difficult it may be for her. The construction crane recalls the Cootings Machine, representing both the potential of humanity to create as well as the dangers (particularly to the environment) that these new creations pose. The novel ends on an ambiguous note, suggesting that humans like Manager are capable of leaving behind the past to construct a hopeful new future, but also suggesting that perhaps humans are doomed to repeat the past, valuing ephemeral ideas like technological progress over more durable ones like the health of the environment.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PART ONE

Rosa and Klara are both female Artificial Friends (AFs), and they're on display in a store in a busy city. From her position, Klara can see out the window to watch the rising and setting of the **Sun**, which she believes gives her nourishment. One day, when the sun goes away, a boy AF named Rex tells Klara she was too greedy and made the sun go dark by stealing all its nourishment. Klara believes Rex before deciding that he must be making a joke.

The Boy AF Rex gets moved to a front alcove of the store. Soon after, a 13-year-old girl comes in with her mom and asks to buy Rex. Her mother is skeptical because Rex's model of AF has problems absorbing sunlight, which is their source of energy. Eventually, they leave.

Klara and the other AFs consider it a special honor when Manager (the human woman who manages the store) places them in the window of the store. They also like it because they get more sunlight (and they become lethargic when out of the sunlight for extended periods of time). Eventually, Rosa and Klara get their chance to be in the window. Rosa hopes they'll absorb so much sunlight that they'll never feel lethargic again.

Klara has also always had another reason for wanting to be in the window: she wants to see more of the outside world. She and Rosa watch as busy people pass on the street, some of them—particularly children—pausing to look through the window at Klara and Rosa. Klara worries that some of the children she sees in the window look sad or angry, but Rosa reassures her that they must all be happy in such a nice city.

The beginning of the novel does not immediately specify that the narrator, Klara, is a robot, but this soon becomes clear. One of the unusual things about Klara's narration is the way she capitalizes certain words like "Sun." In the case of the Sun in particular, Klara capitalizes it because she's solar powered, so the Sun acts as something like a god to her. The unusual capitalization, as well as some of the unusual word choices Klara makes help emphasize how she is an outsider, particularly when it comes to observing humanity.



This section establishes that Klara and the other AFs at the store were built for a specific purpose: taking care of children. The mother's comments about Rex foreshadow how Klara (who is from the same generation of AFs as Rex) is in danger of becoming outdated soon.



Klara doesn't know much about human society, so she calls the woman who runs the store "Manager." The capitalization of Manager emphasizes that Klara thinks the manager is important. Perhaps she thinks that "Manager" is the woman's name or that there is only one Manager in the world. Manager places Klara and Rosa in the window because they will soon be outdated, and Manager wants to sell them while people will still buy them.



Klara's closer position to the window symbolizes that she is slowly beginning to observe more about the outside world. Windows are a recurring motif in the story, even after Klara leaves the store. Rosa's belief that the children are all happy suggests that she is more naïve than Klara and not as skilled at observing humans.



At the end of the day, Klara asks Manager about the sad children. Manager tells Klara that she is special to notice so much. The children Klara sees are frustrated because they dream of having an AF like Klara, but they can't.

A couple days pass, and it's now Klara and Rosa's fourth morning in the shop window. A pale, thin girl of 14-and-a-half named Josie stops at the window and talks to Klara through the glass. Josie tells Klara that she saw her in the window yesterday while riding by in a taxi.

Josie asks Klara questions about what it's like in the shop and then says that Klara is the AF she's been looking for. Josie promises to come back at some point and talk more with Klara.

Later that afternoon, Rosa remarks to Klara how strange it is that, even though they can see the outside world from the window, Rosa hasn't seen many fellow AFs out in the world. Klara realizes the same—in fact, she realizes that the few AFs she does see outside the window always go past quickly, as if they're embarrassed. As Klara watches more, she wonders if the other AFs are afraid, since Klara and Rosa are newer models.

Rosa continues to delight at all the children paired with AFs that she sees, but Klara slowly realizes that some pairs of children and AFs actually don't seem that happy together. Klara studies what she sees, hoping to learn all the skills she'll need to be an effective AF.

One day, Klara witnesses two taxi drivers fighting in what appears to be a case of road rage. They get out and punch each other, shouting the whole time, then get back into their cars and leave. Rosa, however, believes the drivers were just playing, that they enjoyed the experience and that the pedestrians did too.

One of the biggest issues in the novel is privilege. As Klara will learn, some children come from more privilege than others. Klara's understanding that some children are unhappy shows a growing awareness of how different humans come from different circumstances.



Klara's ability to look at people and precisely guess their age, down to the half-year, shows how her powers of observation are in some ways even greater than what a human's even though there are still many things about humans that Klara doesn't understand.



Josie shows an interest in Klara beyond just treating her as a purchase, which shows that Josie herself is unique compared to some of the other children who enter the shop.



The lack of AFs suggests that in fact, AFs may just be a luxury reserved for the richest families. Klara's surprise at learning this suggests that people who come from privilege may not even be aware of it when they live in isolated conditions. It is later revealed that one of the reasons AFs seem embarrassed about being near the store is because they are afraid of being replaced by newer models.



Once again, Rosa seems to be too optimistic, showing that she is a less skilled observer than Klara. Rosa believes the consumerist promise that a person will be happy if they just buy the right item (such as an AF), but Klara is a more skeptical and realistic observer.



Although Rosa is wrong to think the taxi drivers aren't fighting, her naïve observation nevertheless has some truth to it. Rosa realizes that, on some level, even fights and confrontation are a type of "play" and that there is something theatrical about the way people behave in public.



Klara tries to think of what could make her angry enough to fight someone. While thinking of complicated emotions, she remembers Coffee Cup Lady and an event that happened two days after Klara met Josie. In this memory, Coffee Cup Lady is in her mid-60s and wears a thick wool coat. She is small, wide, and round, like the coffee cups on a shelf inside the store. Coffee Cup Lady crosses the street and embraces a man (Raincoat Man). Manager says they look happy, but Klara says they also seem upset.

Manager explains to Klara that maybe Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man haven't seen each other for a very long time. She explains that sometimes people feel pain at the same time as happiness. Rosa doesn't understand the conversation.

At the start of Klara and Rosa's second week in the window, Josie comes back with her mom (the Mother). Josie apologizes for being gone so long. The Mother watches Klara carefully from a distance—Josie explains that that's because she knows Klara is the AF that Josie wants.

Josie asks if Klara really wants to come home with her, and Klara nods. Josie warns Klara that some days she doesn't feel so well. She wants Klara to know in advance because Josie herself hates it when people try to pretend that everything is perfect when it's not. Klara tries to reassure Josie that she wants to help. Josie promises to come back, possibly the next day.

But Josie doesn't come the next day or the day after. In the middle of Klara's second week in the window, Manager moves her back to her previous place in the store, away from the window. Manager says nice things to Klara and Rosa, insisting that they did well in the window, but Klara can tell that a part of her is disappointed.

The reunion of Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man is not an important event to the plot, but it helps Klara understand some important new things about human behavior. The fact that Klara compares the woman to coffee cups (which she recognizes from her store) shows how limited her experiences in the world are and how few objects she's seen, but also how she gets creative with her limited experiences so that she can understand new things.



Manager takes an interest in Klara and wants to help her better understand human behavior. While she simplifies her explanations for Klara, the implication is that Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man used to be lovers or perhaps old friends, but they didn't see each other for a while, and so when they reunite, they are happy to see each other again but also sad, either about how long it's been or about the circumstances that led to their lack of contact.



From the beginning, there is something unusual about the Mother's relationship with Klara. Because Klara herself does not fully understand the situation, the Mother's opinions and motivations remain difficult to understand at first. As with Manager, Klara always refers to the Mother with a capital "M," perhaps reflecting how her model of robot was designed to be friends with children and obey the authority of a mother and a father.



Josie seems to have a very serious chronic illness and is possibly softening her description of this illness for Klara or perhaps not fully aware of how serious it is. Klara's determination to help reflects her selfless personality.



As Klara develops better powers of observation, she begins to notice that humans do not always say what they seem to be really feeling. Even though Klara isn't human, this first section of the book resembles a coming-of-age story in which Klara grows up to learn more about the world.



Manager switches things around, and now, instead of always being next to Rosa, Klara is sometimes next to Boy AF Rex or Girl AF Kiku. Klara can still see out the window, and she notices a big device that she names the **Cootings Machine** (because “Cootings” is written on the side). The Cootings Machine spews pollution and makes the taxi drivers angry. It has a drill to break the ground, and the drill makes a lot of noise.

The two male AFs in the window don't get the sunlight they were expecting because of all the pollution from the **Cootings Machine**. Daytime becomes like night, and the **Sun** stops coming into the store. Manager assures Klara that the awful Cootings Machine has been out front before, and no AF has ever suffered serious harm from it. Nevertheless, after four days without regular sunlight, Klara feels weaker.

Then one morning the **Cootings Machine** is gone, the **Sun** is back, and everyone outside seems happier. Two days later, a 12-year-old girl with spiky hair comes into the store with her father, who wears an expensive office suit. The girl seems interested in Klara, but Klara just looks into the distance at the ceramic coffee cups on the shelf. Klara knows Manager is watching them.

Manager tells the girl that Klara is excellent but that there are even newer models called B3s available that might be better. The girl still wants Klara, but her father convinces her to look at the new B3 models. Later, Manager tells Klara she is surprised at her. She reminds Klara that the customer chooses the AF, not the other way around. Manager says she won't help Klara the next time. She warns Klara not to trust promises made by children.

The new B3 models, three Boy AFs, are calibrated and take up positions in the store. Rosa and Klara are moved to a different side of the store to make space for the B3s.

One day, when it seems like nothing noteworthy is happening, a boy and his mother come into the store. Klara only realizes later that they've bought Rosa, and soon Rosa is taken to the back room to be shipped away.

The Cootings Machine is a construction vehicle working on the street. Presumably, the manufacturer is named “Cootings,” or possibly that's the name of the model of vehicle. For Klara, it is absurd that humans would tolerate the Cootings Machine being there if it makes them so unhappy. This illustrates how contradictory human behavior looks when viewed from an outside perspective.



When Klara is cut off from the Sun, it makes her tired and sluggish. Although she is a robot, this provides a parallel with how humans can feel tired or depressed when they are cut off from nature. One of the humorous elements of the novel is that Klara, an artificial robot, often understands the importance of nature better than the humans who live around her.



Klara is distant around the new girl because she feels that she has made a promise to Josie, and she doesn't want to break that promise by being purchased by another child.



The Manager understands what's going through Klara's head, so she intervenes in a way that will steer the girl and her parent to buy another robot instead. Still, Manager scolds Klara after customer leaves. This scene shows how personal feelings, such as Manager's sympathies toward Klara, often conflict with the duties and obligations of a job, like running a store.



The arrival of the new B3 models suggests the beginning of a new era and that Rosa and Klara may soon become obsolete.



Rosa's sudden disappearance indicates that, ultimately, the economic interests of the store are more important than the friendship between Rosa and Klara, hinting at humanity's materialistic nature.



In the days after Rosa leaves, Boy AF Rex also finds a home and more new B3 models come in. Though the older AFs are nice to the new B3s, Klara notices that the new B3s have been slowly moving away from the older AFs. Klara realizes the B3s are intentionally trying to look like a separate group.

Although it might seem that the robots would all have something in common, in reality, the small differences between them cause them to form separate groups. This is a microcosm for human society.



One afternoon, Manager informs Klara that she's going to have one more chance in the window, this time alone. She promises that she'll find Klara a home. Klara still enjoys watching the outside world from the window, but she finds it harder to get excited.

Although Manager does not say so aloud, the implication here is that if Klara isn't sold soon, she might never be sold. It is never revealed what happens to the robots that are deemed unsellable.



On Klara's fourth day in the window, she witnesses something strange with Beggar Man (a man who lives on the street with his dog). She sees Beggar Man just lying on the ground, not moving. People pass by but don't do anything, other than pausing for a second before moving on. Klara is sad, believing Beggar Man has died. But the next morning, she finds that Beggar Man is sitting up and hasn't died; Klara believes the nourishment of the sun has saved him.

Just like Coffee Cup Lady, Beggar Man teaches Klara something about the outside world. The little scene Klara witnesses has parallels to religious doctrines about people rising from the dead, such as the resurrection of Jesus or perhaps the resurrection of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris (who was sometimes identified with the sky). What's more, the fall and rise of Beggar Man mimics the daily fall and rise of the Sun.



Klara's time in the window ends. Manager tells her she did well, but then, 10 days later, Klara is moved to a rear alcove. Manager tells her that it's only temporary, and that in a few days, Klara will be moved back to mid-store.

Manager's actions seem to contradict her words. One of the major turning points in Klara's development was when she learned that humans don't always say exactly what they're thinking.



Klara can't see much from her position in the back, but she can still hear things, and one day she hears Josie coming back with the Mother. Klara hears Josie tell the Mother about how this is the right store but the AF she's looking for isn't there anymore. Manager tells Josie about a B3 model that's available.

Although Klara understands what's happening, she remains passive and doesn't move out front to greet Josie. This illustrates how Klara is obedient and how she ultimately feels that her duty is more important than doing what she would prefer.



Josie says they must be too late to get the AF she really wanted. But Manager overhears her and says she'll check the back. She brings Klara out and Josie is overjoyed. Josie explains that she would've come back sooner, but she got sick. Manager assures the Mother that, while Klara isn't a B3, her model still has a very good reputation.

Despite scolding Klara earlier, Manager is ultimately sympathetic to Klara's wishes, even when they do not necessarily match the best interests of the store. Manager tells the Mother the exact opposite of what she told the earlier family who wanted to buy Klara, showing how humans change their approach based on the audience.



The Mother is intrigued when Manager mentions that Klara is very observant. The Mother asks Klara questions about Josie to test Klara's powers of observation, all of which Klara answers correctly. Josie has a slight limp, which the Mother asks Klara to imitate. Klara feels everyone watching her, particularly the Mother, who stares so intensely that it's like she's looking through Klara. At last, the Mother agrees with Josie that they should buy Klara and take her home.

While Josie bases her preference for Klara on feeling, the Mother uses more objective criteria to evaluate Klara as a purchase, showing that people's values change as they get older. By asking Klara to imitate Josie's limp, the Mother wants Klara to prove that she knows how to observe her daughter closely. Josie's limp is one of the most distinctive things about her, showing how people can be defined by their illnesses. The Mother and Josie's decision to purchase Klara wraps up this prologue-like section of the story and marks the beginning of a new period.



PART TWO

Some time has passed, and Klara has left the store and is now Josie's AF. Klara finds the house difficult to navigate, particularly the kitchen, since objects keep moving around. Klara likes how the kitchen has a lot of room to let in the Sun, though she finds it strange that out the window she can't see traffic or other AFs.

Klara's difficulties navigating around a house show how sheltered her existence was before being purchased by Josie and the Mother. The sunny window in the kitchen is one of the many windows that appear throughout the story.



Klara believes at first that Melania Housekeeper is like Manager, and that she will teach Klara what to do, but Melania Housekeeper just tells Klara to stop following her around. Despite the lack of specific instructions, Klara eventually learns the routines of the people in her house, such as how the Mother takes a quick coffee every morning at the island in the kitchen.

As with Manager, Klara gives Melania Housekeeper a slightly unusual name: presumably her first name is Melania and "housekeeper" is just her job. Klara's mistaking of jobs and names shows how in human society, sometimes jobs are as much of a person's identity as their name. Perhaps it's notable, however, that the Mother has a job but is still referred to as the Mother, suggesting that, at least from Klara's perspective, her role as a parent is more central to her identity than her role as a worker.



Some mornings, the Mother doesn't have to hurry with coffee. One day, she talks with Josie about the pictures she draws in pencil. The Mother encourages Josie to use color pencils, but recently, Josie has preferred drawing in black and white. These conversations are pleasant, but other conversations are tense, like when Josie describes problems with her various tutors, who help with her education.

This passage helps establish the daily rhythm of life at home for Josie and her family. Although it is tempting to draw a link between Josie's remote tutorial lessons and the remote learning that many students experienced during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that much of Klara and the Sun was written before the onset of the pandemic, particularly since today book manuscripts are often submitted well in advance of publication. Still, the remote, isolated nature of Josie's education undoubtedly resonates with the shifting and unprecedented educational landscape of the early 2020s.



In Josie's bedroom, there is a window that looks out at three adjoining fields. From there, Klara and Josie like to watch the **Sun** set while waiting for the Mother to come home. Once, when the Mother comes home early, Josie even interrupts the conversation so that Klara can see the sunset.

One object out the window that particularly interests Klara is a dark box, which Josie explains is Mr. McBain's barn. For Klara, this barn appears to be where the **Sun** goes to rest in the evening.

Josie explains to Klara that she went to the barn one time, with her best friend Rick, back before she got sick. Klara is confused at first because she believes it's her duty to be Josie's best friend, but Josie explains that things are different and that she and Rick will spend their lives together. Rick lives next door, and Josie will introduce Klara someday.

The next week, Klara meets Rick and sees the outside of Josie's house for the first time. Before that, Josie has to finish a lesson with her professor (which she does remotely in the kitchen, on a device called an "oblong"). After getting permission from Melania Housekeeper, Klara and Josie go outside.

Outside, Melania Housekeeper takes Josie's arm to help her walk, but eventually Josie persuades her to let go so that she and Klara can go next door to see Rick. They climb a hill to meet Rick, and Josie gets short of breath.

When Klara and Josie get to Rick, he is busy flying mechanical drones that look like birds with a remote control. Josie introduces Klara to Rick, but Rick seems unexpectedly annoyed. He has a British accent and says Josie promised to never get an AF. Josie says she made that promise a while ago, and Klara isn't just any AF. Klara realizes that she can learn from Rick about how to be a better friend for Josie.

There is an interesting contrast between Josie's bedroom window (which looks out at open fields) and the store window (which looked out on busy streets). Josie's house is more isolated, and while it seems like a positive thing to be farther away from all the bustle and Cootings Machines of the city, the story later explores some of the downsides of Josie's isolation.



The fact that the Sun seems to go down in Mr. McBain's barn gives it an almost mystical quality, similar to Stonehenge, a landmark that many believe is related to the position of the sun and may have served a spiritual or religious purpose.



Despite her very strong understanding of some aspects of human nature, Klara remains ignorant of other aspects—like, for instance, the ins and outs of friendship. The fact that Rick is one of the only other people around Josie's house shows how isolated they are from the rest of the world.



"Oblong" refers to a stretched-out circle or rectangle. It could be used to describe the shape of current phone or computer screens, suggesting that in the future these items have become even more ubiquitous and so have a more generic name.



The fact that Josie gets winded on a short walk up a hill suggests the extent of her illness goes beyond just having a limp.



Rick seems to be jealous of Klara because he believes that she will replace him as Josie's friend. While on the one hand this worry is baseless—on the other hand, it is true that an expensive AF like Klara represents a life of privilege that could lead Josie in a different direction from Rick, whose family has less money.



Melania Housekeeper calls for Josie to come back. Before leaving, Josie makes Rick promise to come to a meeting at lunchtime next Tuesday, and Rick reluctantly agrees. Josie asks Klara what she thinks of the outside world. Klara says she likes it, and that she likes Rick as well. Josie is pleased but admits that Rick doesn't always make good first impressions.

That evening at dinner, Josie and the Mother discuss Josie's upcoming "interaction meeting." Even though Josie gets good grades, she still has to learn how to get along with others, and so she must host a meeting with some of her peers. The Mother says that this skill is particularly important for college.

Josie asks if Rick can come, and the Mother agrees after some hesitation. Josie asks if the Mother thinks it's a bad idea for Rick to come or if the other kids will be rude to Rick. The mother again hesitates, but says as long as Rick wants to come, everything will be OK.

On the morning of the interaction meeting, Josie is anxious. She goes into a room filled with the parents of the other children, then Rick appears at the door, and she introduces him. The adults are polite, but Klara notices that they're cautious when speaking to Rick. The Mother tells Josie to go host her guests (the other children), so Josie takes Rick into the other room, leaving Klara standing there unsure what to do.

Left with the adults, Klara hears them talking about how Rick "missed out," but they nevertheless agree that Rick seems bright and that it's good for Josie to learn how to get along with all kinds of people. One parent asks if Rick's parents decided "not to go ahead," and this causes an awkward moment that leads to the parent apologizing to the Mother. The Mother just asks everyone to drop the subject.

The parents talk about Josie's health, and the Mother says she has good days and bad days. The Mother soon changes the subject and says they should all go into the kitchen for pastries.

The slight disagreement between Josie and Rick over the upcoming lunch meeting suggests that, despite everything Josie and Rick have in common, there are also some ways in which they differ, which the lunch meeting will highlight.



Modern education often includes extracurriculars or other activities to help students socialize, but remote learning makes this more challenging. In the future world of this novel, formal "interaction meetings" are how distant students get to meet each other.



The Mother's hesitation before answering questions suggests that perhaps she knows Rick will be out of place at the meeting, but she doesn't want to admit it. Something is clearly different about Rick and Josie, but at this point in the novel, Klara only has a vague understanding of it.



Rick's arrival proves the Mother right, as it is clear that the other adults see something strange about him. While the interaction meeting is supposedly for the benefit of the children, it is clear that the meeting also plays a role for the parents.



This section is intentionally cryptic, as Klara begins to slowly understand what sets Rick apart from Josie. The parents don't watch their speech around Klara because they don't see her as human, which is perhaps meant to evoke how in the real world, rich people often treat servants like robots.



Even with other adults, the Mother is hesitant to discuss Josie's condition, adding to the mystery in the novel surrounding the exact nature—and origins—of Josie's illness.



The Mother tells Klara that she should go in to be with Josie and the children, so Klara goes. Rick is standing alone, and some girls talk about how they should do something to welcome him, since he must feel weird. They offer him a chocolate bon-bon and start talking with him about movies. Rick doesn't eat the chocolate, which creates an awkward situation, so Josie interrupts to introduce Klara.

After greeting Klara, the girls mostly ignore her and begin to gossip about the other children. One of the boys notices Klara and asks her to come over. He grabs her and pins her arms. Another boy says they should throw Klara, since the B3 models always land on their feet. The children give Klara other commands, but she doesn't respond to them.

When Klara doesn't follow commands, a boy again suggests throwing Klara across the room. Just then, Rick intervenes by pointing out that the boy has a "pet object" on him (the sort of toys that children carry with them). The boy backs off.

The children go outside. Klara thanks Rick for intervening. Rick explains that he doesn't belong in the group because it's a meeting for "lifted" kids. Lifting is a procedure that parents (especially wealthy parents) have their children undergo in order to make them more intelligent, and it is required for most colleges. Rick talks about how he plans to save Josie from becoming like the other children. He talks about how he and Josie made a plan to always be together. Finally, Rick leaves, saying he has to check on his mother.

Klara feels that Josie acted different during her interaction meeting with the other children and was more distant toward Klara, but in the days after, Josie is cheerful toward Klara again.

The Mother seems to recognize that Klara is listening to the conversation, so she sends her away. Although the other girls at the interaction meeting say they want to help welcome Rick, it actually seems like they want to make him feel excluded by treating him differently from the others.



The gossiping behavior of the children mimics that of the parents, suggesting that perhaps one of the purposes of the interaction meeting is to help the children learn to be more like their parents. The fact that the children suggest throwing Klara around implies that perhaps they come from even more privileged backgrounds than Josie, since they are willing to use such an expensive robot so carelessly.



This passage makes it clear that Artificial Friends like Klara are expected to follow commands and that Josie's decision to treat Klara like an actual friend might be unusual. This treatment of AFs raises ethical questions, since Klara seems to experience something like human emotions—therefore, if she were forced to only follow commands, her existence would be uncomfortably similar to enslavement.



Lifting seems to be some sort of medical procedure in this story, but it is also a futuristic allegory for how real-world privilege can seem to "lift" some students with resources above poorer ones. Although lifting might seem beneficial, since it helps students get into college, the story also explores the negative side effects of "lifting."



Klara begins to understand that humans act differently depending on the environment they're in, something that Klara never would have had the opportunity to notice before, given her isolated existence at the store and in Josie's house.



Three weeks after the interaction meeting, Klara notices a change in Josie's health. The Mother tells her she must get well so that they can go on a trip to Morgan's Falls. Josie promises to get well and then asks if they can take Klara. The Mother says they can.

Josie shows Klara old pictures of her family at Morgan's Falls. In one photo, Josie has a companion—when Klara asks about her, Josie reveals that it is Sal, her sister, who has been dead for a long time (from a different illness than what Josie has).

The Mother warns Klara in advance of the Morgan's Falls trip that Josie sometimes gets overexcited, and so Klara will have to watch out for her. The Sunday morning of the trip, Klara notices Josie looking weary, but they get in the car anyway. It's Klara's first time in a car.

In the car, the Mother suddenly accuses Josie of hiding how sick and weary she feels. She wants to call off the trip, but Josie pleads that Klara's looking forward to it. The Mother surprises everyone by ordering Melania Housekeeper to take Josie out of the car so that Klara and the Mother can go to the falls on their own. Josie reluctantly agrees to stay home, but she says that Klara should go.

The Mother drives in silence with Klara for a while before talking about Josie. The Mother wishes to be more like Klara and not have feelings, but Klara believes that she does have feelings, and that she discovers even more feelings the more she observes. They talk about Josie's father (the Father)—he works at a place on the way to the falls, and he and the Mother get along fine now, according to her.

The Mother parks the car, and she and Klara begin to walk up to Morgan's Falls. They make it to the falls themselves. The Mother wonders if maybe Josie could have made the trip after all. The Mother talks about how the whole family used to come with Sal. Klara asks why Sal died, but the Mother doesn't want to answer. She concludes it was right not to bring Josie.

The Mother seems to be using Morgan's Falls as an excuse to try to motivate Josie to get better. Josie's request to include Klara shows how much Klara has become a part of Josie's life in such a short time.



This passage reveals the particular significance that Morgan's Falls has for Josie's family. The presence of Josie's dead sister in the photo seems to suggest that the place has nostalgic memories attached to it, although perhaps also painful ones as well.



One possibility is that, consciously or unconsciously, the Mother has planned this Morgan's Fall trip as a test for Josie. Josie clearly wants to go on the trip and will try her best to seem healthy. This will show the Mother the extent to which Josie is able to overcome her illness.



The Mother's actions here are surprising and perhaps seem irrational, but it also makes sense that she would act irrationally, given the stress she feels about Josie's declining condition. By forcing Josie to stay home, it almost seems as if the Mother is punishing Josie for being sick, showing that she is angry about Josie's condition and sometimes lashes out in the wrong direction.



Klara is not sure at first why the Mother wants her to come on the trip. It seems at first that perhaps the Mother just wants an escape, and Klara's presence is incidental, given that the Mother does not even think Klara is capable of having human-like feelings.



The Mother's conversation with Klara emphasizes how the real significance of Morgan's Falls seems to relate to the Mother's dead daughter (and Josie's sister), Sal. Klara's question about Sal shows that she's getting bolder and willing to ask about things that are not necessarily related to performing her duties as an Artificial Friend, but the Mother's reluctance to answer suggests that it's still a very sensitive topic.



The Mother asks Klara if she's still able to mimic Josie's walk. She doesn't ask Klara to do the walk, but she does ask Klara to do other things in the style of Josie. Klara roleplays, talking as Josie, saying that she just felt a little tired this morning but that she's going to be fine. Klara (as Josie) says that some "special help" will be coming to make her feel better. Eventually, the Mother abruptly ends this by calling Klara by her real name.

This passage is intended to be a little unsettling. By asking Klara to imitate Josie, the Mother seems to be preparing for a future in which Josie is gone. It makes sense that the Mother would be thinking about this, given how Morgan's Falls is tied to her memories of her dead daughter. It is unclear how well Klara understands what's going on here, since Klara doesn't reveal everything she knows to the reader, though Klara can clearly tell that the Mother's behavior is unusual.



On the ride back, the Mother says she enjoyed the trip, and suggests perhaps they can do it again, if Josie is too sick to come. The Mother asks if the "special help" Klara mentioned (to cure Josie) is real, but Klara says it's just a hope, based on observation.

The Mother's suggestion of future trips suggests that she is hoping Klara will be able to fulfill the role Josie once played in her life. Klara's mention of "special help" is one of the first signs of her growing interest in spirituality, although many humans dismiss her feelings as nothing more than superstition.



When the Mother and Klara get back, Josie is drawing intensely. Klara thinks that Josie seems mad at her and wants to be alone, so she leaves Josie to continue sketching.

Like her mother, Josie also experiences anger about her illness and sometimes expresses it by lashing out.



PART THREE

Even the morning after the Morgan's Falls trip, Josie is cold toward Klara. Klara is surprised that the Mother also seems distant, since it seemed like the trip went well.

Klara still has a limited understanding of human emotions, so she can't understand how a trip can seem to go well but also make someone distant at the same time. The Mother seems pleased with Klara but sad that her trip made her imagine a future without Josie.



Josie becomes weaker, and now instead of going down to the kitchen for breakfast, the Mother has coffee in Josie's bedroom. Melania Housekeeper is bothered by Klara's hovering around, so she sends Klara outside. As she walks, she gets the idea of asking for help from the **Sun** for Josie, since the Sun did so much to help Beggar Man.

Klara's relationship with the Sun transforms over the course of the book. She goes from observing it from a distance to trying to cultivate a personal relationship with it in a way that resembles spirituality or religion.



A doctor visits Josie often, as does Rick. Josie stops taking remote school lessons. Melania Housekeeper makes Klara chaperone when Rick is there. During Rick's visits, he and Josie often play "the bubble game," a game that they invented when they were younger. Josie draws sketches, then Rick adds dialogue or thought bubbles to them.

The bubble game represents how even though Rick and Josie are different, their differences can complement each other. The fact that Josie sketches while Rick writes dialogue for them suggests that Josie is more fanciful and more of a leader, whereas Rick is more practical and willing to follow her lead.



Josie and Rick discuss a man who is painting Josie's portrait in the city. Rick finds him creepy, particularly since Josie has been to his studio four times but never seen anything. He takes lots of pictures of her different body parts. Josie counters that the Mother is always there, and she wouldn't just hire a pervert.

Josie's lack of suspicion suggests both that she has a trusting nature and that she trusts her mom in particular. Rick, perhaps because of his less comfortable upbringing, is more likely to regard strangers with suspicion.



Eventually, after more visits, the bubble game goes from fun to tense. Rick has a harder time writing the words. He is particularly stumped by what to write about a tribe of eyeball aliens looking at a female figure. Ultimately, Josie is disappointed by what Rick writes.

Josie seems to be using her art as a way to express feelings that she can't put into words. The eyeball aliens could reflect the scrutiny of the doctor, the portrait being taken of her, her mom's constant supervision, or perhaps all of the above.



Klara sees one of the bubble game comics on the ground while tidying up one day. Josie asks her what she thinks of it. Klara believes that Rick interpreted two of the figures in the drawing as himself and Josie. Josie doesn't like the text, because it implies that she is a blob character who changes with different situations, but Klara believes the text Rick wrote for the characters is kind to Josie, since it shows she is clever at protecting herself.

The fact that Rick tries to compliment Josie but ends up accidentally insulting her shows how difficult communication can be, even among people as close as Josie and Rick. Although Rick did not intend to insult Josie, his implication that she changes her personality seems to have hit too close to home, since Josie is still learning how she wants to present herself in new situations—like, for instance, in the interaction meetings.



On another afternoon, Josie and Rick play the bubble game again. Rick is taking a while on a bubble, and they start talking about other subjects, and Josie suggests that Rick should try to get into Atlas Brookings, a college that takes a small percentage of unlifted children (like Rick). Josie is worried that "the plan" won't work if Rick doesn't get a good education. Rick finally finishes the bubble. Josie is offended by what he writes, and Rick leaves without another word. The comic features a Josie-like character saying that she's glad her mother has "Courage" so that she can stay in bed all day and be sick.

With his bubbles, Rick implies that Josie's mother is to blame for Josie's illness, since the illness itself is connected to the process of being "lifted." Josie's insistence on helping Rick get into Atlas Brookings seems to be an attempt to help him attain a level of privilege similar to hers in order for them to be together. Rick seems to genuinely want to stay with Josie, but he seems more skeptical of the lifestyle changes he might have to make in order for "the plan" to become reality.



One morning later, Klara finds Josie drawing and writing intensely. She asks Klara to put the paper in an envelope in a drawer. Klara guesses correctly that the paper must be for Rick. But Rick has not come back since the bubble game incident. Klara volunteers to deliver the letter, and Josie agrees.

Once again, Josie finds that she has an easier time expressing herself in drawings than in person. This might suggest a creative personality, or it could be the result of her isolated lifestyle and educational background.



Klara takes the letter to Rick's house. She notices Rick's house is not as nice as Josie's. Rick is excited about the envelope and invites Klara inside. Rick apologizes for the smell and says his mother isn't well (but not sick like Josie), but Klara can't smell.

Even someone like Klara can see that there is a difference between how Josie lives and how Rick lives. Klara's inability to smell, however, suggests that, for a robot, such differences are not as significant as they are to humans.



Rick opens the envelope and finds that it contains a drawing that says “Rick and Josie forever” on it. A happy stick-figure boy and girl are surrounded by pointy looking objects. Rick likes it. Klara suggests maybe he should say thank you in person. Rick wonders if it’s a good idea, but Klara argues it is.

Klara then asks about McBain’s barn. She believes it may be related to helping Josie with her illness. Rick is confused, but Klara doesn’t want to explain everything yet. Rick trusts Klara and tells her there’s an informal path going to the barn, but it’s not maintained and could be difficult for an AF.

Just then, Rick’s mother (Miss Helen) interrupts. She doesn’t seem to notice Klara at first and talks a lot. She asks Klara questions about various things, like how she learned to speak. She then talks about how Rick is trying to get into Atlas Brookings, the only decent college that accepts unlifted students, but Rick has had trouble getting tutors. Rick asks his mother to drop the subject.

Miss Helen begins telling Klara a story about how one time she looked out the window and saw the Mother (whom she calls Chrissie) with a child who wasn’t Josie. Rick suggests maybe his mother wasn’t in the best condition that day, but Miss Helen asserts that she was seeing and thinking clearly. Miss Helen believes she saw the Mother with Sal—except this was two years after Sal died. Klara agrees that this is a strange story.

Rick suggests Klara should leave, but Miss Helen says first they need to discuss Rick’s education. She notices Josie’s drawing, but Rick takes it and puts it away before she can see. Miss Helen gets off topic, so Klara asks her what she has to say about education.

Klara has become more acting on her own behalf instead of strictly following orders. Despite this, her main priority is generally not herself but Josie. The fact that even a robot learns to care for other people could be read as an argument against the idea that people are inherently selfish, since Klara started out as something like a blank slate.



Klara’s secrecy about her actions suggests that her “religion” with the Sun is becoming more and more elaborate. On the one hand, there is something primal about Klara’s beliefs—something that recalls ancient humans worshiping the sky. But there are also elements to her beliefs about the Sun that are quite ordinary and that would ultimately make sense to contemporary readers: she asks the Sun to help cure an illness, just as many people today often pray to ask for an illness to be cured.



It’s implied that Miss Helen is drunk or similarly impaired, and that this is typical for her. This contrasts sharply with the Mother, who is very put-together and businesslike, favoring coffee instead of alcohol. This suggests that Rick’s inability to gain college admittance has less to do with his own aptitude and more to do with his mother’s inability to secure the proper credentials for him.



Because Miss Helen is drunk, she is less inhibited about saying things she probably shouldn’t. Although Miss Helen is an unreliable source, she doesn’t seem to be making up the story about seeing Sal after she was dead. Klara already knows that the Mother was deeply affected by Sal’s death and that there are things about it the Mother doesn’t want to discuss, so this deepens the mystery.



Miss Helen keeps switching topics of conversation, showing how she lacks the focus to provide stability for Rick in the way that Josie’s mom does for her.



Rick leaves. Miss Helen says that she'd like for Klara to help Rick study. Then she says that the real issue is getting Rick to want to try (because he believes he can't go away and leave his mother alone). Miss Helen then says that, while she has a "secret weapon," the only one who can really affect how Rick thinks is Josie.

Despite her flakiness, Miss Helen does seem to understand some important things about her son's personality—in particular, how he is too stubborn to listen to her but how Josie might be able to influence his opinions.



Klara says she's surprised that Miss Helen would choose a path that might lead to her own loneliness. Then Rick comes back, and Klara says she must get back to Josie. Rick asks Klara to tell Josie that he really likes the picture and that perhaps he'll be over the next day to say so himself.

Despite her flaws, there is also a selfless side to Miss Helen, and it seems that she really does want what is best for Rick. Rick's decision to go back and see Josie means that the drawing had its desired effect and Josie was able to use it to express her feelings.



Following Rick's instructions, Klara makes the journey to Mr. McBain's barn just before sunset. She stumbles, but Rick (who has been watching from a window) comes out to help her. He agrees to carry her piggyback the rest of the way.

This passage shows Rick's selfless personality. He is willing to do what he can to help Josie, even when Josie doesn't know about it and when it doesn't directly affect Josie. More so than many other characters in the book, Rick treats Klara as a person instead of an object.



Rick and Klara make it to Mr. McBain's barn, and Klara asks to be left alone. She sits and waits in the barn for the **Sun** to fill it. As the Sun gets near, she forms words in her thoughts (because she believes the Sun doesn't need to hear her aloud) and asks the Sun to make Josie better, just like the Sun did for Beggar Man. She apologizes to the Sun if her request seems selfish and promises that she'll do something special in return if the Sun helps her.

Klara's idea that the Sun can read her thoughts makes her ritual in the barn resemble prayer. Klara envisions her relationship with the Sun as almost transactional, where if she does enough to please it, it might do her a favor. Although the story seems to take place in a realistic future world, where the Sun is not actually a godlike being, the novel never goes outside of Klara's perspective, and she remains a committed believer in the power of the Sun.



As Klara heads back, she finds that Rick ignored her and waited for her to finish. Klara tells Rick that his mother, Miss Helen, is stronger than he realizes and that he should consider going to college, but Rick remains skeptical. He says his mother's "secret weapon" is just an old flame of hers who is connected to the school.

Rick shows his selfless nature both in his concern for Klara as well as in his concern for his mother, Miss Helen. As Klara points out, however, it's possible to care too much, and Rick's concerns about his mother could end up holding back his own future.



The next day, Rick comes to visit Josie again. They tease each other and reconcile. Rick suggests that maybe Klara should give them some privacy. Klara says she has to stay to stop any hanky-panky, but Josie assures her that's not going to happen.

This passage shows the importance of in-person interaction and how, even though Rick and Josie made up after Rick received Josie's drawing, it takes an in-person meeting for them to really get back to how they used to be.



Klara begins to think about destroying the **Cootings Machine**. She doesn't want to tell anyone about her plan, but—conveniently—the Mother tells Klara that they'll soon be taking a trip into the city. They are all going so that Josie can have her portrait done by Mr. Capaldi. Mr. Capaldi is also interested in meeting AFs. Rick and Miss Helen will also be coming because they have their own business in the city.

Later in the week, Rick and Miss Helen visit the house. Everyone seems to be in a good mood. Rick tells Klara he's decided he's going to do his best to get into Atlas Brookings, the college that accepts unlifted students. He even agreed to meet with the man his mother used to be involved with who has connections to the school.

Two days later, Klara is a little surprised when Melania Housekeeper tells Klara that the Mother won't allow her (Melania) to come to the city with them, so it's Klara's duty to keep a close eye on Josie. Melania calls Mr. Capaldi a creep and suggests he might not really be a portrait painter. Klara agrees, and Melania Housekeeper says she and Klara are on the same side when it comes to protecting Josie.

One night, still before the trip, Klara hears Josie crying out in the middle of the night. Josie says she isn't in pain but needs the Mother at once. Klara says that as an AF, she can do whatever Josie needs, but Josie insists on her mom. When the Mother comes, Josie says she doesn't want to die, and her mom stays until Josie falls back asleep.

PART FOUR

Josie, Klara, and the Mother go to Mr. Capaldi's studio. The Mother is tense because the Father is coming to see Josie. The Father is late arriving in his taxi.

At last, the Father arrives. He gives Josie a present: a small mirror that shows her face how it actually looks, not in reverse like most mirrors. The Mother interjects to introduce Klara, and the Father greets Klara curtly. The Mother insists they all have to hurry along, or they'll be late for the appointment with Mr. Capaldi.

Destroying the Cootings Machine would be the special gift to the Sun that Klara promised in McBain's barn. Her secrecy about her actions suggests that she knows the humans around her might not approve, but she nevertheless remains convinced that her actions are right.



Miss Helen was correct, and it was ultimately Josie (perhaps with Klara's help) who was able to convince Rick to try to apply to Atlas Brookings. Though Josie has slightly selfish reasons for wanting him to go there, she also seems to truly believe it is a worthwhile opportunity for Rick.



The Mother seems to sense that Melania Housekeeper does not always approve of the Mother's plans regarding Josie. It seems clear that Mr. Capaldi is doing much more than simply making a painting of Josie, but if Klara has realized what's happening, she doesn't reveal it to the reader yet.



This passage shows that Josie puts on a strong face in public but that, in private moments like in the middle of the night, she sometimes has a hard time confronting the horror of the disease she has and the possibility of her own death.



The Father's late appearance in the story suggests that he has not been a major presence in Josie's life since he left.



The mirror is an interesting contrast to all of the windows in the book, since a mirror helps people see themselves rather than the outside world. Although the Mother claimed earlier to be on good terms with the father, this passage makes it clear that perhaps things are a little more tense than she was willing to let on.



In the car, the Father and the Mother argue about their careers and about the portrait. Meanwhile, Klara notices that they're near her old store, and she sees the **Cootings Machine**, which is still spewing pollution. As it turns out, the store has moved somewhere else. Josie promises they can find the store's new location tomorrow. Before going in to meet Mr. Capaldi, the Mother reminds Klara that he will have a couple questions for her.

Klara, Josie, the Mother, and the Father enter Mr. Capaldi's house. The Mother asks to see the portrait, and Mr. Capaldi agrees, but when Josie also asks to see, he refuses. The Father asks why, but Mr. Capaldi just explains that it makes the portrait worse if the subject gets too self-conscious by seeing the results early. The Father says he'd like to finish up quickly, so he can go alone with Josie to get a meal.

Mr. Capaldi says he has a questionnaire for Klara to answer. He leads Klara to a separate room. While he does, they can hear the Father and the Mother having an argument about something being "not consistent." Klara begins the questionnaire.

The questionnaire starts with questions that need very short answers but moves to questions that require longer answers. As she's doing the assignment, she notices Mr. Capaldi leading the Father somewhere on the opposite balcony. The Father looks suddenly ill. They go into a room, and when the Father comes out, he looks not ill but angry.

Klara overhears the Father, the Mother, and Mr. Capaldi arguing, with the Father taking issue with Mr. Capaldi's ethics. Klara gets up and goes to the other side of the balcony. She goes through a door, using a code she watched Mr. Capaldi input. Inside, she sees something that looks like Josie suspended in the air. While it has a very close resemblance to Josie, small details like the hair suggest that it's not the real thing.

Klara carefully goes back to where she was and finds the mood is even more tense. The Father is trying to make Josie leave immediately. Mr. Capaldi says to just let them go, so they leave without Klara. With them gone, the Mother confesses that she had misgivings about Josie's "portrait" even before the Father raised objections. Mr. Capaldi tries to reassure her.

The Mother seems to be deliberately keeping Klara in the dark about something—perhaps this also explains why they left Melania Housekeeper behind. The disappearance of the AF store suggests that the setting Klara grew up in, which seemed so permanent at the time, may have only been a temporary trend in the grand scheme of things.



The Father and the Mother clearly seem to disagree over whatever it is that Mr. Capaldi is doing. Though Klara does not let on that she knows what's happening here, she later reveals that she did guess what the "portrait" of Josie might really be.



The questionnaire for Klara makes it clear that Klara plays a much larger role in Mr. Capaldi's work than anyone has told her. Though Klara doesn't comment on it, she seems to already understand this on some level.



This passage hints that the Father finally saw the "portrait," confirming his bad feelings about it. Klara describes the whole situation in a matter-of-fact manner and from an observational distance, even though she likely has her own feelings about what's going on.



Klara just happens to casually mention that she watched Mr. Capaldi enter a code and then used it to trespass in his building. This suggests that not only has Klara started to keep secrets (about her beliefs on the Sun), but also that she has learned how to be deceptive. Klara discovers something that has already been strongly hinted: that the "portrait" is actually a replica of Josie, perhaps even one that could replace her after death.



The Father wants Josie to leave because he doesn't want her to see the "portrait," likely because he believes it would frighten her and make her think of her own death. The Father seems to disapprove in general of the portrait, but it isn't clear whether he is being more realistic (by realizing it isn't possible to replace Josie) or less realistic (by refusing to confront the possibility of Josie's death).



Mr. Capaldi invites Klara down. He asks if he is doing a good job. Klara says yes, the “portrait” (meaning the lifeless Artificial Friend replica of Josie) looks accurate. She confirms that she completed the questionnaire and has stored the answers. The Mother asks Klara to describe what she thought she saw.

The humans seem unsurprised that Klara was able to sneak a look at the “portrait”-in-progress of Josie. Mr. Capaldi in particular seems to believe strongly in the capabilities of AFs.



Klara explains that for a while, she suspected that Mr. Capaldi’s “portrait” was not a painting but in fact an AF. She confirms that it looks accurate but suggests narrower hips. The Mother still seems doubtful and mentions how things didn’t work out in the past with Sal.

This passage confirms that Klara isn’t always straightforward with the reader and that sometimes she realizes things without immediately stating them in the narration.



Mr. Capaldi suggests that what they did in the past with Sal was much less advanced, no more than a “bereavement doll.” What he’s working on currently is something that actually will be Josie, a true continuation of her. The Mother doubts whether she’ll ever be able to believe that.

This passage explains the strange scene that Miss Helen witnessed earlier from her window. The exact form of the “bereavement doll” Mr. Capaldi created for the Mother isn’t specified, but apparently it was life-sized and looked realistic from a distance.



Klara interrupts to suggest that they might not even need the new Josie. But she also says that she understands why she’s been asked to observe Josie so closely, and that she will use everything she’s learned to train the new Josie to be as much like the old Josie as possible.

Klara has an optimistic personality, perhaps motivated by her growing faith in the power of the Sun to influence humanity. Nevertheless, she also has a practical side and remains devoted to her duty, even when doing so is difficult.



Mr. Capaldi and the Mother confess that the real purpose of the day’s appointment has more to do with Klara than it did with Josie. Mr. Capaldi explains that he’s not asking Klara to train a new Josie but in fact, to become her. Mr. Capaldi believes his survey will give scientific proof that Klara is qualified to continue as Josie. The Mother concludes by saying that she’s still on board but needs a break for the day. The Mother drives away with Klara, saying that they have things to discuss.

It is unclear at this point whether Capaldi is actually a gifted and idealistic scientist or whether he is a fraud who is trying to dupe the Mother with pseudoscientific proof—the Father and Melania Housekeeper seem to believe the latter. The Mother herself seems to have doubts but remains convinced, which perhaps reflects her desperation more than it reflects genuine faith in Mr. Capaldi



The Mother drives Klara to outside the burger place where Josie and the Father are, but the Mother decides that Josie and the Father could use some time together. The Mother says that, ultimately, it’s not Mr. Capaldi asking Klara to be Josie but the Mother herself. She blames herself for Josie’s illness—she got sick as a result of being lifted. The Father was against the idea of Josie being lifted, since Sal had already died.

The Mother opens up to Klara, showing that she increasingly views Klara as something like a person. This raises a difficult ethical question for the Mother—on the one hand, she wants an AF who can act enough like a human to replace Josie, but on the other hand, it could be cruel to force an AF with its own identity to become someone else.



Klara asks what will happen to her current body if she becomes Josie. The Mother says that shouldn't matter. What's more, if she becomes Josie, Klara will get not only the mother's love, but also Rick's.

Though the Mother has clearly considered the ethical questions of "continuing" Josie, ultimately, she seems to place her own concerns over any potential objections that Klara might have to the arrangement.



The Mother goes into the hamburger restaurant, then the Father comes out without Josie. The Father tells Klara that the Mother recommended they drive around. The Father admits that his conversation with Josie was tense because he had to lie to Josie, which he isn't very good at doing.

The Father believes that he knows what's best for Josie, but he finds himself humbled when he actually spends time with Josie and realizes how difficult it is to find the right things to say to her.



The Father begins to drive Klara around, asking if there's anywhere particular place she'd like to go—like, for instance, her old store. Klara agrees to see the old store. While they drive, the Father asks Klara if she believes in human hearts and if she thinks it's possible to learn one. Klara thinks it would be difficult, but if it's the best way to save Josie, Klara is willing to attempt it.

The Father doesn't seem to know quite what to make of Klara—he doesn't see her as fully human in the way that children like Josie and Rick do, but he also doesn't feel comfortable giving orders like the Mother does. His hesitant and distant relationship with Klara seems to mirror his relationship with Josie.



As they approach the location of the old store, Klara admits that she isn't really there to see the store. She talks about destroying the **Cootings Machine** to stop its pollution. Since the Father is an engineer, Klara wonders if he can help. The Father is confused, but Klara says she can't explain more, just that she believes it will help Josie.

While Klara generally prefers to keep her plans secret, she brings the Father into her conspiracy to destroy the Cootings Machine. Perhaps after she fell and needed Rick's help on the way to Mr. McBain's barn, she has become more realistic about her own abilities.



The Father is still confused, but he agrees to help Klara disable the **Cootings Machine**. They make it to the machine. The Father mentions that even though he wasn't able to explain to the Mother why he hates Mr. Capaldi, he'd like to try to explain to Klara. Part of him is afraid that Capaldi is actually correct—that there's nothing special about Josie and that she can be perfectly copied. Klara says she understands, and that this just means the solution is to heal Josie so that the portrait won't even matter.

The Father's decision to help Klara could reflect open-mindedness or it could simply reflect his own desperation and feelings of helplessness, leaving him open to all suggestions. Because Klara is both like a person and not quite like a person, the Father feels more comfortable explaining his thinking to her than he did for the Mother.



The Father finally explains that there is a substance called P-E-G Nine that can be put into the **Cootings Machine** to break it. He explains that Klara actually has P-E-G Nine inside her head, and that she could perhaps still function with only half her supply, but he doesn't recommend it. Nevertheless, Klara wants to go ahead with it.

It is possible to read this section and be suspicious of the Father's motives, since sabotaging Klara would also sabotage the Mother's plans with Mr. Capaldi, although this would arguably be out of character for him, since there is nothing else to suggest that he's particularly devious, and he himself says there would be easier ways to sabotage Klara, if he really wanted to.



The Father warns that, if there is any impact related to removing P-E-G Nine from Klara, it will be cognitive. Klara maintains that she wants to do it. They sabotage the **Cootings Machine** and then meet the Mother, Josie, Rick, and Miss Helen at a sushi café. Everyone seems happy, although Josie is quiet.

Miss Helen gives Rick advice about what to do when he meets Vance, her old flame with connections to Atlas Brookings, the college that accepts some unlifted students. Miss Helen tells the Father that she's worried about meeting Vance again because she used to be passionate with him for years.

Miss Helen suggests that the Father and Vance might get along because they both have fascistic leanings. The Father tries to explain that it's not like that, even though after losing his job, he moved to a community where people are heavily armed to defend against other groups. Miss Helen partly apologizes. They all wait for Vance.

The Father, Josie, Klara, Miss Helen, and Ricky all leave the sushi café. The **Sun** is nearly setting, and Klara doesn't think it will send any special help that day. They spot the Mother on the phone nearby. They are all waiting outside a theater for Vance to come meet Rick. Klara overhears the Father hanging back, still complaining about being called a fascist. He says that Miss Helen herself might not be living in such a peaceful area soon.

When they have a moment, Rick asks Klara what's going on with Josie, whose behavior seems strange. Klara says she doesn't know but reassures Rick that he has completed the task she began in McBain's barn. Rick is happy but still doesn't understand. Klara is having vision problems and takes longer to recognize the shapes of people.

Josie tells Klara that they met a server at the restaurant who remembers her old store, but it turns out that the server doesn't know where it moved or if it moved at all.

Klara's willingness to potentially compromise her own system just to help Josie shows both how deeply she cares about Josie as well as how deeply she has bought into her new Sun-based spirituality.



Miss Helen seems to take pride in having found a way to help her son, so much so that she even brags about it, even though the means of helping Rick are unconventional and not certain to work.



The story only provides a few details about the Father's life outside of Josie. It is unclear if Josie's father is actually a fascist, but it does seem that he lives in some sort of isolated community where people are heavily armed to keep out outside threats, whether real or imagined. This, in turn, indicates that life outside of the specific area where Josie lives is difficult and potentially dangerous.



The fact that all the characters wait for Vance outside a theater foreshadows how the meeting with Vance will be a sort of performance with the goal of convincing Vance to help Rick with his education. Again, Klara does not have enough information to know whether the Father is being realistic or paranoid with his talk of danger.



Though Josie's parents have been trying to protect her from what's going on, the way she started crying in the middle of the night at the end of Part Three illustrates that on some level she is aware of the dangers she faces.



The server's comment shows the ephemeral nature of big cities and how the place that shaped Klara's first days of consciousness is now barely even remembered.



The Mother and Miss Helen talk while they wait for Vance to come out for Rick, which is taking a while. The Mother asks if Miss Helen regrets not lifting Rick, and Miss Helen says she does, despite all the trouble it has caused for the Mother.

Miss Helen and the Mother's conversation about lifting shows that each acknowledges how hard it was for the other one to make their decision, and that for decisions with such big consequences, there may not ever be an easy answer.



Just then, the Father comes up to the Mother and asks if she told Josie everything. The Mother admits that she told Josie that the portrait wasn't a painting. She says she didn't tell Josie everything, but that Josie is old enough to remember Sal's doll and to figure some things out for herself.

Unlike the Father, who was able to withhold the truth from Josie, albeit uneasily, the Mother ultimately told her about how the portrait was really an AF. The Mother makes mistakes with Josie, but she is also better suited to have difficult conversations.



Finally, Vance comes out. He and Rick greet each other politely. Meanwhile, a woman outside the theater gets angry because she thinks Klara is going to be taking up one of the seats. The woman eventually goes away, and Klara overhears Josie asking the Mother to make sure that Klara will get sole use of her room. Her mother says they don't need to think about that, since maybe it won't even happen that way.

The angry reaction of the random woman at the theater suggests that outside of Klara's bubble, some people have very negative opinions of AFs. The scene suggests that in the future, people might one day be bigoted against robots.



Miss Helen comes and announces that she'll be taking Klara because the Mother has to go back and have a private conversation with Josie. Josie whispers in Klara's ear to reassure her that it's OK to go. As she walks away with Rick's family, she begins to regain some of her orientation.

While it previously seemed like everyone was trying to shield Josie from harsh truths, now it's Klara who is being excluded from big conversations, perhaps in preparation for the possibility that Klara might one day have to "continue" Josie.



Rick, Miss Helen, and Vance all get a booth at a restaurant, and Klara sits at a booth across the aisle. Rick tells Vance about how he's very generous and how his mother has always spoken well of him. He explains how he has a talent for engineering, like making drones, and that he's trying to get a place at Atlas Brookings. Vance cautions that he chairs the scholarship committee and that Atlas Brookings doesn't show favoritism, but Rick says he only wants help if he's deserving of a place.

Klara's position at a separate booth suggests her second-class status—it might also be an attempt to appease Vance. On another note, although Rick hasn't been lifted, he seems to have a natural talent for saying exactly what he needs to say in an interview setting, thus suggesting that it's still possible to be naturally intelligent in a world in which everyone else has received artificial cognitive advantages.



Rick shows Vance his notebook of drone schematics, some of which he has already created but many of which he's planning to create. Vance asks if his drones, which look like birds, have surveillance capabilities. Rick says yes, but that they could be used for good purposes, like security. Vance asks if there are potential ethical issues with this surveillance, and Rick says that's up for regulators to decide, which pleases Vance.

Rick's answers here seem to show either naivety or a willingness to say whatever he needs to say to please Vance. It is obvious that Rick's drones could be used to spy on people or even attack them with weapons, but Rick argues that a creator doesn't have responsibility for how his creation gets used.



Vance says Rick has done well, but that because there are so many unlifted applicants to Atlas Brookings, after hopeless prospect students are weeded out, it becomes a lottery. He asks again what Rick is doing with him if he doesn't want favoritism, suddenly changing the mood. Rick is surprised, but Miss Helen intervenes to say that they *are* asking for favoritism, even as Rick tries to object.

Vance says this is a problem, both because Miss Helen has openly acknowledged the favoritism and because it's her asking, not Rick. He says it's also a problem that Helen didn't communicate with him for 27 years. Miss Helen says she treated him poorly but also that she treated everyone poorly back then.

Vance says Miss Helen used to be like a queen, and that he's both sad and glad to see that she hasn't been able to keep it up forever. Miss Helen asks what's so terrible about her current life. Vance says it's that she's become fragile. Helen agrees and begs for forgiveness. Vance isn't satisfied with her apology, which he feels is too broad and vague. He rehashes specific things she did to embarrass him.

Rick interrupts to say that maybe they should leave and that maybe he doesn't actually want Vance's help. Miss Helen says Rick doesn't know what he's saying. Vance agrees maybe it's best to leave. He tells Rick he likes him and his drawings, then leaves.

Rick asks Klara to come sit with him and Miss Helen. Miss Helen wonders if that was enough to satisfy Vance. Rick says he'd never have come if he'd known that's how things would go. Klara wonders if Vance and Miss Helen were ever as gentle as Rick and Josie, or if Rick and Josie might ever become as unkind as Vance and Miss Helen. Miss Helen asks Klara what she thinks, and Klara tells her she believes Vance will help Rick.

Vance's sudden shift in mood is difficult to understand. It does not seem that anything Rick said set him off, so it seems more likely that Vance went into the meeting with his mind already made up. It soon becomes clear that this meeting might have less to do with Rick and Vance and more to do with the old relationship of Miss Helen and Vance.



Though Vance blames Miss Helen for bringing up favoritism, it seems likely that Vance was never interested in giving Rick a chance and that the meeting was always a chance for him to settle an old score with Miss Helen.



Vance relishes the opportunity to humiliate Miss Helen after having been out of contact with her for 27 years. This passage shows how even people in positions of power can get hung up on details from the distant past—though there are cases where Miss Helen didn't treat Vance well, they also happened quite a long time ago, well before Rick was even born.



With Vance, Rick sees the true nature of prestige and respectability, witnessing how powerful men often use their authority to become petty score-settlers. This causes him to be less interested in seeking that sort of life for himself.



Rick generally has positive feelings about Klara, and so the fact that he made her sit at another table while Vance was there reflects how he was willing to compromise his principles and try to become someone else for the sake of pleasing Vance. He regrets compromising his integrity, particularly because it seems like he won't even gain anything from it.



The Mother comes back and finds the group's booth. The Mother has left Josie alone at the apartment where they're staying, and so she's anxious to get back. She drives Rick and Miss Helen to their hotel and then goes back to the apartment, where Josie is asleep. Klara tells the Mother that it's possible to hope that things might get better when the **Sun** rises tomorrow. The Mother warns Klara that she just had a strange conversation with Josie and that, because of this, Klara shouldn't pay too much attention if Josie wakes up and says anything strange.

Josie stirs when Klara comes into her room. She is half asleep but starts to wake up. She tells Klara that the Mother offered to quit her job so that she could always be with Josie, but Josie told her she wanted to keep Klara. Klara wonders if the Mother was just trying to make Josie feel less lonely, but Josie says it was just a bad idea that's not going to happen anyway.

The Mother, Josie, Klara, Rick, and Miss Helen all drive back from the city. Miss Helen says she's more hopeful than before that Vance will help and speculates more about his motivations. The Mother suggests to Helen that she and Rick did their best, so they may as well just wait and see.

As the car keeps going, Klara is disappointed to notice there is another **Cootings Machine**, even bigger, that creates more pollution than the first one. The Mother says there are probably other options for Rick if Atlas Brookings doesn't work out, but Josie asks if she'll be allowed to follow Rick there. The Mother says young people can keep in touch. Klara is disappointed and believes that the new Cootings Machine is why the **Sun** didn't intervene to help Josie.

PART FIVE

Josie starts becoming weaker 11 days after returning from the city. She has periods of strange breathing when she's only partly awake. Meanwhile, Klara begins to help Rick with his studies. He comes and visits Josie, but she's only able to stay awake for short periods of time.

As the Mother becomes more comfortable speaking openly with Josie, she also becomes more comfortable opening up to Klara. While the trip to the city causes many characters to lash out at each other, there is also some benefit, since the characters are finally being honest and speaking their minds to each other.



The Mother's offer to quit her job is a tacit admission that Josie may not have long left to live, and so might soon need hospice-like care. Josie's decision to rely on Klara shows both how important Klara has become to Josie as well as a mature acknowledgment from Josie about how difficult it would be to place such a large burden on her mom.



Miss Helen holds on to the hope that Vance will help them, perhaps because she is unwilling to accept the idea that she wasn't able to provide Rick with the type of life she wanted for him.



The return of the Cootings Machine recalls the fall and rise of Beggar Man earlier in the novel. The new, bigger Cootings Machine seems to suggest that efforts to improve the environment by reducing pollution often feel ineffective because of the sheer amount of opposition. While Klara is accepting this hard reality, Josie gets used to the reality that she and Rick might end up on different paths as they move into adulthood.



The fact that Josie has trouble breathing could be symbolically connected to the big pollution-spewing Cootings Machine from the end of Part Four. Though that specific machine may not literally be causing her disease, air pollution makes it more difficult for everyone to breathe.



On one visit, Klara asks Rick if he'll walk with her outside. Rick says Josie is worse than she's ever been before and that the doctor and the Mother have given up hope. Klara, however, believes there is still hope and that help might come from somewhere they don't expect.

Klara says she must go back to McBain's barn right before the **Sun** goes down. Rick says he'll help. Klara asks Rick to really think and tell the truth about something: is the love between Rick and Josie genuine? Rick says he doesn't have to think—the answer is yes. Klara is happy. They make plans to meet that evening.

That evening, Rick again carries Klara to the barn. He allows her to go inside alone and says he'll be waiting in the same place as the last time. Just like the previous time, the barn fills with the sun's orange light. Klara begins forming words in her mind to address the **Sun** again.

Klara begs the **Sun**'s forgiveness for failing to stop the **Cootings Machine**'s pollution, but she asks the Sun to recognize her attempts to stop pollution. She once again asks the Sun to help Klara as it helped Beggar Man. She says she willingly gave up some of her fluid and would willingly give more, even all of it, to help Josie.

Klara tells the **Sun** that she remembers how happy he was on the day that Coffee Cup Lady met Rain Coat Man on the street. She believes the Sun is happy when people love each other, and she says that Josie and Rick could be just as happy as Coffee Cup Lady and Rain Coat Man.

Thinking back to the conversation between Vance and Rick, Klara tells the **Sun** that she knows favoritism isn't a good thing. Still, she says that surely young people in love are the most deserving of the Sun's help. The Sun goes most of the way down, but there's one particularly bright spot left. It turns out to be some sheets of glass that Mr. McBain left around the barn. Then the Sun finally disappears all the way.

Klara's hope seems to be because of her growing faith in the power of the Sun, despite all the signs that things are getting worse.



Although Klara's spirituality is similar to certain real religions, it doesn't imitate any religion in particular. Here, the emphasis on true love resembles a fairy tale more than religion. Like a human, Klara uses stories and narratives to better understand the world.



One of the main features of many religions is ritual, often involving repetition. Here, Klara comes back to the barn, demonstrating how her new spirituality resembles human religion with its repetition.



Klara's spirituality also puts a major focus on sacrifice, a concept that is essential in both ancient and modern religions. While, on the one hand, Klara sees a transactional element to her relationship with the Sun, on the other hand, the Sun's actions seem mysterious and unpredictable to her.



As Klara's spirituality deepens, she pictures the Sun having more and more personality. A bright day is a day when the Sun is happy. Interestingly, very early in the book, Klara makes the decision on her own to use male pronouns for the Sun, raising questions about how she came to that decision.



Klara's reference to the conversation between Rick and Vance shows once again that she's always listening, even when she gives no indication that she is. The sheets of glass in Mr. McBain's barn seem to be yet another example of a window (or at least window-like object) appearing at a crucial moment in the story.



In the following days, the Mother and Josie's doctor argue about whether Josie should go to a hospital. The adults all take turns watching Josie, even though they know that Klara is as good as anyone at spotting danger signs in Josie's health. The normal routine is disrupted, and no one takes meals at the usual time.

One day when Rick is visiting, the Mother pulls him aside to ask if he feels like he won. Rick doesn't seem to understand. The Mother says that Josie bet high—she (the Mother) might have shaken the dice, but Josie was the one who gambled (by being lifted). And Rick played it safe. Does Rick feel like a winner, she wonders. The Mother says that Josie has been excited about the whole world for her entire life. She asks Rick to think about his future and if his life is even worth anything, since he gambled for such low stakes.

Although Josie usually isn't well enough to talk, Rick says that he spoke to her recently. He says that Josie gave him a message to pass on to the Mother at the correct time. The message was that Josie will always love the Mother, and that she would make the exact same choice about being lifted if she had to do it again.

The Mother is surprised by the message and can't respond. Klara interrupts them and says that they have to go upstairs at once because the **Sun** is coming out. Rick and the Mother are worried, but they find that Josie is sleeping as normal.

In Josie's room, Melania Housekeeper wants to close the blinds to let Josie sleep, but Klara insists that they need to open the blinds and let as much **Sun** in as possible. The Sun begins to illuminate Josie and her whole bed. They all sit and watch.

During normal times, the humans are willing to trust rationality and efficiency, believing in Klara's proven capability as a caretaker. But in a crisis situation, as Josie's health becomes critical, the humans rely less on rationality and put more emphasis on being there themselves to provide a human touch.



The Mother seems to be in a dark mental place due to Josie's declining condition. She has suggested in the past that she blames herself for the decision to have Josie lifted, but here she can no longer stand having that blame on her. Instead, she tries to justify her decision to have Josie lifted by insulting Rick and suggesting that even if he lives to an advanced age, his life won't have been as full as Josie's.



Rick understands that the Mother is distressed and that this is the reason she said what she did. It's unclear whether Rick actually spoke to Josie or whether he is inventing or perhaps embellishing the story. In any case, Rick showed during his meeting with Vance that he's very good at understanding what adults want to hear.



Klara's hopefulness contrasts with the humans' lack of hope, raising the question of who will be proven right as Josie's illness reaches its most critical point.



This is the most important scene with a window in the story. Klara's insistence to keep the window open suggests that it is healthy to be open to the outside world—and particularly to nature. The scene of the light flooding into Josie's room recalls many earlier appearances of the Sun, particularly in the store in Part One, as well as in Mr. McBain's barn.



Josie wakes up and asks what's going on. She asks if a blind is stuck and wonders why so many people are in her room. She says she feels better. The Mother says they should assume nothing, just take things one step at a time.

Josie seems to be healed by the Sun, proving Klara's faith right. Because the whole story is narrated by Klara, however, there is reason to doubt whether things "really" happened exactly as she describes or whether Klara has deliberately presented the events in a way that confirms what she believes. This mystery is deliberately left unsolved. What is clear, however, is that Klara's hope and the Sun (which represents nature) both played a crucial role in Josie's recovery, suggesting that pessimism and isolation from nature can be unhealthy.



PART SIX

Klara believes the **Sun** helped Josie just as it helped Beggar Man. Seasons and years go by. Josie does well with tutorials and she and the Mother often argue about college, particularly since Rick is no longer interested in Atlas Brookings.

Although Part Five ends on a miraculous note, Part Six almost immediately returns to a more realistic tone, with Rick not getting his acceptance to Atlas Brookings.



Josie begins to go away on trips with other young adults, which are considered an important part of her college preparation. Rick still comes over, but less often, particularly as he gets involved with his own projects, including a used car he buys.

As Josie and Rick approach college age, the difference in privilege between them becomes more apparent. Josie's new friends are richer and can afford trips, whereas Rick gets involved with used cars, suggesting that rather than going to college to get a white-collar job, he is on track to start a blue-collar job (like, say, as a mechanic).



The last time Klara sees Rick is when she goes out to greet him after hearing his car. Rick says that, thinking back, he remembers the morning when the **Sun** came into Josie's room and how it seemed like that was the moment she started feeling better. At the time, he thought Klara's actions in the barn were all AF superstition, but now he wonders if there was something more. Klara says her actions in the barn involved such a special favor that she still doesn't want to discuss them.

Rick told the Mother what she needed to hear when Josie's illness was at her worst, and now he tells Klara what she needs to hear by validating her faith in the Sun. Perhaps Rick does so because he knows that, with Josie headed to college, Klara will soon have fulfilled her purpose as an Artificial Friend, or perhaps Rick genuinely was inspired by seeing Klara's hope and spirituality, even at such a dark time.



Klara does mention, however, that she's worried. She told the **Sun** that Josie and Rick's love was real and forever, but it seems that they're preparing for different futures. Rick says their love wasn't a lie then and—in some ways—still isn't a lie. He says he'll always be searching for someone like the Josie he once knew.

Rick demonstrates a lot of maturity and introspection for his age, perhaps indicating that his difficulties with his mother, Miss Helen, have caused him to grow up quickly. Rick shows how the truth isn't as straightforward as Klara believed it to be.



Rick asks about Melania Housekeeper, and Klara mentions she was trying to get accepted by a community in California. He then asks if Klara will be all right after Josie goes to college. She says the Mother is always kind to her. Rick says he is also always there if Klara ever needs him.

More young adults come to visit Josie, now in their own cars (or hired cars) without parents. When they come, Klara gets out of the way and goes to the Utility Room. When Josie finds out Klara has been spending so much time in the room, she arranges a way for Klara to stand on a plastic crate to see out to the **Sun**.

Like Josie, the Mother also has less to do with Klara. One day, she is surprised to walk in on the Mother talking with Mr. Capaldi. Mr. Capaldi says he has some things he wants to say to Klara.

Mr. Capaldi says that lots of people are afraid of AFs at the moment because they believe they're too smart. He believes people might be less afraid if they better understood how AFs work. Klara says she might be willing to help, as long as it won't cause problems for Josie or the Mother. He wants to take Klara apart so that people can see her inner workings.

Although Melania Housekeeper seems to have been treated comparatively well by Josie's family, the fact that she disappears suddenly and is only mentioned after the fact suggests that Melania Housekeeper must have had her own life outside of Josie's family that Klara never knew about. It also suggests that maybe the employer-employee relationship between the Mother and Melania was more disposable than it seemed, even though Melania appeared at one point to be a member of the family.



The young people showing up without parents (as opposed to the interaction meeting, to which their parents accompanied them) suggests that, as Josie and her friends grow up, they become increasingly independent. This independence means that Josie has less of a need for Klara. Although Josie is mostly content to grow apart from Klara, she does seem to feel occasional moments of guilt, such as when she finds a crate in order to make Klara's isolation more comfortable.



Mr. Capaldi remains an ambiguous figure in the story—it is unclear whether he is an idealist who believes in the potential of technology or just someone who saw the Mother's situation as an opportunity for him to advance his own research.



Mr. Capaldi's speech seems to reference something that Klara witnessed outside the theater in the city, when a woman seemed to show prejudice against AFs. This passage tries to imagine how people in the real world might feel if artificial intelligence ever became advanced enough to rival human intelligence—and how many humans would probably fear what they didn't understand. Still, Mr. Capaldi seems to lack empathy, not considering how his plan for the good of all AFs could end up being cruel to Klara. His proposal hints at the idea that some utopian tech ideas might have a dark side to them.



The Mother interrupts to say this isn't what she and Mr. Capaldi discussed on the phone. She says she believes Klara deserves her "slow fade." She refuses to let Klara even consider Mr. Capaldi's offer. Mr. Capaldi wonders if it's because the Mother is still mad at him, even though she originally approached him first.

The Mother recognizes that Klara is sentient enough to deserve a peaceful end of life. The image of Klara being taken apart is perhaps particularly horrifying to the Mother because she was, at one point, prepared for Klara to literally become Josie, her own daughter. Mr. Capaldi's lack of understanding shows how many people in technology—even, or perhaps especially, those with utopian goals—are blinded by a lack of empathy and ethics.



The days before Josie leaves for college are hectic, particularly because the new housekeeper is less orderly than Melania Housekeeper was. At one point, Josie invites Klara to come to her bedroom. Josie says she's afraid of going away to school, but she doesn't want to let fear get in the way. She makes a reference to seeing Klara at Christmas, but only if Klara is still there. Klara has noticed several references to her own departure.

Klara has mostly been out of Josie's bedroom for a while, so the return to Josie's bedroom (where Josie's miraculous recovery occurred) suggests a temporary return to the way things used to be. Josie has ignored Klara for a while, but she tries to once again treat Klara as a best friend like she used to.



Josie had hoped Rick would be there to say goodbye, but Rick is miles away with his drones and his new friends. Josie hugs Klara for a long time and then tells her that if she never sees Klara again, Klara was great. Klara thanks Josie for choosing her.

The physical distance separating Josie and Rick at this moment represents the emotional distance that has been forming between them for a long time. The dissolving relationship between Josie and Rick suggests that real life is not a fairy tale, even if it did temporarily seem like one on the morning when Josie was healed.



Klara's memories begin to blur together, although she believes she can always put the memories back in order whenever she wants to. She is no longer at Josie's house and now has a special place in a new area called the Yard, where the only tall object she can see is a construction crane in the distance.

It's tempting to wonder whether certain events in the story "really" happened at all, such as whether Josie actually recovered from her disease or whether Klara is recalling events incorrectly because she is near the end of her life and slowly fading. Nevertheless, while there is some evidence that Klara may be an unreliable narrator with her own biases, there isn't evidence to suggest that she is completely misremembering events or blatantly lying. All in all, it probably makes the most sense to take Klara's version of events more or less at face value, given that there isn't a clear reason to do otherwise.



Sometimes visitors come to the Yard and Klara hears human voices, but mostly it's just yardmen who work there. One of the yardmen offers to move Klara to a spot where there's three other AFs, but Klara likes her current special spot. Klara can no longer move, although she can turn her head.

Klara's life in the Yard seems to deliberately evoke the experience of a nursing home, where many residents often live close together but can sometimes have a hard time interacting due to their various ailments.



One day, Klara is surprised to recognize Manager in the yard. Manager is glad to see Klara and says that she has been looking for her in the Yard for a while. Klara says she's glad to see Manager. Manager asks if Klara was with the same family the whole time, and Klara confirms she was.

Manager says she no longer looks after AFs, but she likes to come to the Yard and other places, both to see former AFs and to collect little souvenirs. Klara asks about Rosa. Manager says she saw Rosa two years ago and learned that things didn't work out so well for her, but she doesn't want to say more.

Manager asks about the family Klara went to. Klara says her home was the best home and Josie was the best teenager. She says she would've "continued" Josie if necessary but that things turned out for the best, even if Rick and Josie aren't together.

Manager asks what "continuing" Josie means. Klara explains how Mr. Capaldi believed there was nothing special inside Josie and that an AF like Klara could have become her. Klara, however, now believes he was wrong and that there was something special—not inside Josie but inside the people who loved her.

Manager asks if Klara would like to be moved over to be near some B3s in the Yard. Klara says she'd prefer to be alone to put her memories in order. Manager admits that, despite the B3s' technical advances, Manager never liked them as much, and customers seemed to feel the same way.

The appearance of Manager, who has been absent from the story since Part One, gives the novel a circular structure, perhaps recalling the famous hero's journey myth structure, where a protagonist returns to where they started, having changed along the way.



Manager's response suggests that perhaps AFs aren't made anymore, perhaps because of the prejudices of people like the woman who got angry at Klara outside the theater or perhaps because of bad situations like what happened with Rosa (the specifics of which are never revealed). The novel asks readers to consider the ethics of AFs without providing an easy answer: whether having Artificial Friends is good for humans and whether it is a good existence for the AFs themselves.



Klara's insistence that Josie was the best, even after Josie ignored her at the end, seems to suggest that Klara truly led a happy existence. But this doesn't answer ethical questions about AFs, since it is difficult to compare Klara's happy experience to Rosa's unhappy one. It's also unclear whether Klara's happiness is enough to balance out the unhappiness other AFs seem to experience.



Although many parts of the novel are ambiguous, here Klara directly states what is arguably one of the novel's biggest themes: that what makes a person special is how they are loved by other people. Although this might seem like a hopeful or even sentimental message, it doesn't negate the darker elements of the story, such as the implication that Klara is in the Yard because her system is worn down and that she will soon be dead.



The fact that Manager never liked the more powerful B3 AFs as much suggests that not all technological advances are positive. This implies that technology's value to humans is never just about sheer power but instead about the less quantifiable ways that it impacts life.



Before Manager goes, Klara says she must let Manager know that there was an incident in Josie's home where the Sun showed particular kindness. Manager says she's sure the Sun was always kind to Klara. They say goodbye, and Klara thanks Manager one last time. As Manager walks away, she moves less steadily than she used to in the store. She stops in the mid-distance, and Klara thinks she might turn around, but she just looks up at the crane, then continues to walk away.

The ending is bittersweet: it's happy because Klara had a good life but sad because Klara's life is almost over. The manager's new limp seems to recall the limp that Josie used to have. It perhaps reflects how humans have flaws but find ways to keep moving anyway. The crane, which is another construction vehicle like the Cootings Machine, seems to represent human technology and progress. As Klara's life comes to an end—and soon after it, potentially the whole era of AFs—Manager looks to the crane, perhaps imagining what humans will create next and what effect it will have on the planet.





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