

***Klara and the Sun* Lesson Plan 3**

Symbolism and Meaning in *Klara and the Sun*

Created by Juanita Crider and Emily Pearson

Overview: This lesson explores how *Klara and the Sun* uses symbols (such as the Sun) for world-building as well as to explore faith, power, and care. Throughout the novel, Ishiguro presents Klara's beliefs with remarkable sincerity, encouraging readers to consider the ways faith emerges from observation, experience, and cultural understanding.

By examining how symbols throughout the novel function within Klara's worldview, students will discuss how belief systems shape interpretation, action, and ethical decision-making. Finally, students will creatively visualize Klara's conception of sacred spaces within the novel while supporting their work with textual evidence.

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Evaluate how symbols contribute to world-building and characterization.
- Explain how Klara's beliefs influence her decisions and relationships.
- Communicate literary analysis through creative visual interpretation supported by textual evidence.

Before Class Preparation:

Students should have read:

- William (Bill) DeMarco, "Part Two: The Impact of Culture on Leadership Decision-making." 2019.
 - Alternatively, Mircea Eliade, "Introduction," in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt, 1987.
- Suggested passages for review:
 - pp. 4-5 (Klara absorbing the Sun's nourishment in the store, and is accused of 'taking' all the sun)
 - pp. 28-31 (First encounter with the Cootings machine)
 - Additional passages could include those centered on the barn and Klara's prayers to the Sun.

Class Structure:

15 minutes: Introduction to symbols in literature

- Can begin guiding discussion with questions such as:
 - What distinguishes a symbol from a motif?
 - Why do authors rely on symbolism instead of stating ideas directly?
 - Can symbols mean different things to different characters?
- Record student responses before introducing the idea that symbols often gain meaning through culture, belief, and personal experience.
- Briefly discuss how cultures throughout history have interpreted the Sun as a source of life, power, divinity, and renewal.

20 minutes: Small Group Research Activity

- Break students into small groups of 3-4 people and allow each group to claim and research a sun deity in another culture (e.g., Greek, Egyptians, Aztecs, Japanese/Shinto, Incas, Akan). Once a deity has been selected, then have each group identify:
 - The defining characteristics of the sun deity
 - How it was worshipped
 - How it was perceived to interact with humans
- Students should then compare these findings with Klara's understanding of the sun, referencing at least one specific moment in the novel.
- To conclude this section of the lesson, have each group consider the following:
 - Does Klara appear to worship the Sun?
 - Why does Klara interpret the Sun as possessing agency?
 - How do Klara's experiences shape these beliefs?
 - How does vulnerability shape what Klara does to get the Sun's attention?
 - How do other characters (including humans and other Artificial Friends) respond to Klara's understanding of the sun?

30 minutes: Creative Interpretation

- Students will create a visual of what students imagine the sun deity looks like based on Klara's descriptions and interactions; alternately, students could create a visual of sacred spaces for Klara's interactions with the sun (i.e. the barn, interactions with the Cootings machine, Josie's bedroom, the front window at the store)
 - Students should incorporate colors, symbols, textures, and imagery that communicate how Klara experiences the space.
- Each project should include:
 - 5–8 visual elements
 - At least three quotations from the novel

- A short explanatory paragraph discussing how the visual choices reflect Klara's beliefs and the symbolism of the selected subject.

15 minutes: Gallery Walk and Discussion

- Display student projects around the classroom (or digitally if the activity was completed using a program such as Canva or Slides).
- Invite students to observe one another's work and identify recurring themes throughout.
- Conclude with a whole-class discussion using questions such as:
 - Why does Ishiguro never tell us whether Klara's faith is "correct"?
 - Does Klara's belief in the Sun make her more or less human?
 - What role does faith play in a world dominated by technology?
 - Can belief itself become a form of knowledge?
 - What does the ending of the novel suggest about hope, sacrifice, and care?
- Encourage students to reflect on how the novel complicates the relationship between artificial intelligence, spirituality, and humanity. Remind them that throughout the novel, the reader sees Klara as a person, as an observer, and finally as a believer, thus revealing how Ishiguro ultimately uses an artificial narrator to explore profoundly human questions.