

***Klara and the Sun* Lesson Plan 1**

Introduction to Narration and Posthumanism

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Overview: This lesson introduces students to *Klara and the Sun* through the lenses of posthumanism and speculative fiction while emphasizing close reading as the foundation for literary interpretation. Rather than treating artificial intelligence simply as a technological development, Ishiguro presents Klara as an observant narrator whose unique perspective complicates traditional distinctions between humans and artificial beings. Students will first examine how Ishiguro encourages readers to empathize with Klara through narration and characterization before considering the broader philosophical questions raised by the novel.

The lesson's blended emphasis on posthumanism and speculative fiction also introduces genre as a critical framework. Although *Klara and the Sun* contains recognizable elements of science fiction, it diverges from many traditional genre conventions by prioritizing emotional, ethical, and philosophical questions over technological spectacle. By combining close textual analysis with posthumanist theory, students will begin considering how speculative fiction challenges assumptions about consciousness, identity, and what it means to be human.

Objectives:

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

- Define posthumanism and explain how it challenges traditional definitions of humanity.
- Identify characteristics of speculative fiction and science fiction within *Klara and the Sun*.
- Analyze how Ishiguro develops Klara's character through narration and perspective.
- Explain how narrative voice shapes readers' sympathy for Klara.
- Evaluate the ethical implications of treating Artificial Friends as commodities using textual evidence.

Before Class Preparation:

Students should have read:

- Braidotti, Rosi. "Introduction." *The Posthuman*. Polity Press, 2013.
- *Klara and The Sun* up to pp. 1-45 (through the end of Part One)

Class Structure:

10 minutes: Genre brainstorming activity

- Begin by asking students to brainstorm characteristics they associate with science fiction.

- Record responses on the board, if possible, before guiding discussion with questions such as:
 - What makes something science fiction?
 - What kinds of technologies, settings, or characters do you expect when a work is labelled as “science fiction”?
 - What themes commonly appear in this genre?
 - Is it possible for a novel to belong to more than one genre?
 - What, if any, is the distinction between science fiction from literary fiction?
- Once students have concluded discussion, write the following genre labels on the board:
 - Science Fiction
 - Literary Fiction
 - Dystopian Fiction
 - Coming-of-Age Novel
 - Philosophical Novel
 - Social Critique
- Ask students where they would place *Klara and the Sun* based on the section that they read for the day’s lesson. Encourage them to support their answers with examples from the text. This exercise functions to emphasize that genre functions as an interpretive lens rather than a rigid category.

20 minutes: Close reading activity

- Divide students into small groups of 3-4 people and assign each group one short passage from the assigned reading for the day; alternatively, students could be allowed to choose their own passage. Possible passages may include but are not limited to:
 - Klara’s observations from the store window.
 - Klara’s conversations with Rosa.
 - Klara’s first interactions with Josie.
 - Scenes in which customers evaluate the Artificial Friends.
- Once each group has been assigned—or selected—their passage, ask them to discuss the following questions:
 - What does Klara notice that a human narrator might overlook? Or, what does Klara *not* notice that a human narrator may?
 - What emotions does Klara display?
 - What information does Klara misunderstand or interpret differently?
 - How does Ishiguro encourage readers to sympathize with Klara?
 - Could this passage have been narrated by a human character? Why or why not?
- Groups should identify one quote that best illustrates Ishiguro’s characterization of Klara and prepare to share their findings with the class.

20 minutes: Lecture on posthumanism

- Introduce the major concepts of posthumanism using students' observations from the close reading activity as points of reference.
- Topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Humanism versus posthumanism
 - Rosi Braidotti's critique of human exceptionalism
 - Technology and changing definitions of humanity and the human
 - Personhood versus biological humanity
 - Why science fiction frequently explores posthuman questions
- As a class, create a list on the board of what characteristics a human has. If needed, to help frame this for students, ask them to consider what humans are according to traditional humanism.
- Next, create a new list of the qualities that Klara has demonstrated so far in the novel. Discuss how Klara complicates traditional definitions of humanity and how Braidotti's framework helps us as readers to interpret the novel.

30 minutes: Structured debate regarding characters from the novel

- Rather than debating from their own perspectives, assign each group a character from the novel, such as:

○ Klara	○ Rosa
○ Josie	○ An engineer responsible for
○ Chrissie	designing Artificial Friends
○ The Store Manager	
- Present the following statement as the topic for the debate: "Artificial Friends deserve moral consideration comparable to human beings."
- Each group should develop an argument from the perspective of their assigned character, supporting their position with textual evidence.
- After each group presents, invite students to step outside their assigned roles and briefly discuss which arguments they found most persuasive and why.

10 minutes: Closing reflection

- Conclude with a whole-class discussion that synthesizes the day's ideas.
- Possible questions include, but are not limited to:
 - What qualities make Klara sympathetic?
 - Does empathy require biological humanity?
 - Why does Ishiguro make Klara the narrator rather than telling the story from a human perspective?

- What questions does speculative fiction allow Ishiguro to explore that realist fiction might not?
- Has your definition of “human” changed after reading only the first section of the novel?