

ENGLISH – AFTER DARKNESS TEXT RESPONSE

Silence is a major theme in this novel. Reflect on how the following passages illustrate Ibaraki's changing attitude toward silence throughout the narrative:

“I wondered whether I should mention to Yamada my Broome connection to Johnny Chang. But we'd never been intimately acquainted, so I kept quiet.”

“In keeping my silence I hadn't exercised the very quality that makes us human: our capacity to understand each other.”

In the Historical-fiction, “After Darkness”, a bildungsroman, Piper scrutinises on the depths of silence and isolation on the human psyche that acts as a catalyst for the entirety of the novel. Ibaraki, the protagonist embodies the notion of silence as he is encountered with a myriad of challenges and hardships that compel him into a reticent lifestyle, distancing himself from his close friends and family. Ibaraki becomes accustomed to remaining discrete and hiding his feelings and opinions when he is required to express them, believing it won't prompt issues and complications. He's inability to assimilate the model of a Japanese male and connect with important others on all levels of human interaction ultimately result in severe repercussions for him. However, Piper accurately places Ibaraki on a turning point as he consistently reflects on his past wrongdoings with intense guilt and regret, in turn maturing him and allowing him to become an active participator rather than a silent observer. Therefore Ibaraki's transition from resorting to silence to openly expressing his internalised feelings is a result of the losses he experienced as he begins to fathom human connections that are built on mutual understanding and trust.

Naturally, Ibaraki is vigilant and reserved and this innate reticence has been compounded by circumstance and training. Ibaraki is bred into a Patriarchal Japanese society in the 1930-1940s which saw a rise in nationalism and pervasive resentment towards the West. Yet from his father's premature death, Ibaraki was void of a male-figure to educate him on the culture of the ideal Japanese male and their demeanour. This ultimately placed Ibaraki in a quandary between his identify and belonging as he begins to realise that Broome “has become his home” and “wanted to cry” when he had to leave. This dual sense of national belonging is mirrored by his personal conflict between loyalty to his work and loyalty to a moral imperative to tell the truth, mirrored too in the way he is torn between the restraints of Japanese culture and the openness of Australian culture. In the bombing of Broome, Ibaraki does not celebrate Japan's victory. Instead, he mourns the destruction of the town he recently called home and worries about the fate of his former friends: ‘I was glad for the pocket of darkness that hid my tears’. Moreover, Ibaraki goes into research where there is minimal human interaction and interpersonal skills are not exploited. In the lab, Ibaraki has been indoctrinated by Major Kimura, the head of the research unit into having a mindset that revolves around keeping secrets from loved ones as “confidentiality is [their] number-one priority. Kayoko, Ibaraki's wife “didn't believe husbands and wives should keep secrets from each other” yet Major Kimura threatened Ibaraki in order to make clear that he “can't talk about [his] work to anybody - not to his spouse, his parents... not even to each other”, ultimately causing a damaging misunderstanding in their relationship. Thus, Ibaraki's upbringing and activities inevitably shape his silent personality, creating major conflicts and dilemmas with his close ones.

Restraint and discretion for Ibaraki were desirable personal virtues, as he believed keeping quiet would not create more trouble. Ibaraki always looked for excuses to get out of situations as he did not want to endure the consequences that arise with it.*Quote about him being a doctor, doesn't need to get involved into drama.* He misreads the camp dynamic and people in Loveday, where he is predisposed to trust authority figures such as Yamada

and Mora and their opinions on other internees. Piper develops Ibaraki as a weak-willed and manipulative character as he chooses to obscure all possibilities of Yamada assaulting Stan, a half-cast who was attempting to commit suicide. He refuses to believe the Japanese men could have beaten Stan, he bandages him 'in silence'. Ibaraki soon realises the truth and is mortified and self-castigated about his "insensitivity". Yet, Ibaraki cannot find the courage to take the initiative and stand up for Stan before it's too late and he is shot. Ibaraki chooses to believe he is silent and discreet for the sake of his brother Nobuhiro, "who wanted nothing more than to serve the Emperor in battle", but in fact he becomes deeply worried about the nature of his work. In the altercation between Yamada and Johnny Chang, "[he] wondered whether [he] should mention to Yamada [his] Broome connection to Johnny Chang, But [they'd] never been intimately acquainted, so [he] kept quiet. Ultimately, Ibaraki's silence was stemmed from his desire to remain out of trouble, but however, he comes to see the weakness in remaining silent.

Ibaraki begins to understand the implications of holding himself in and remaining "aloof" as he reflects and rectifies his wrongdoings. From the ramifications of his reticence, Ibaraki begins to question whether he considered "the silence a comfort or a terror" every time he resorts to remaining quiet about his past. As he comes to terms that his priorities were misplaced, primarily focusing on his career rather than his marriage or his friendships, he realises that the capacity to relate to and engage with others is essentially "the very quality that makes us human". He fathoms the imperativeness of opening up to others as being "secretive and withholding" can be detrimental to personal relationships. Reminiscing on his past experiences, he learns that "weakness is remaining silent" and that, "bravery is telling the truth even if a challenge to authority brings shame". Ibaraki matures and transitions into a more profound and deep tone as he attempts to rectify the broken bonds that he obviously broke. This prompted Ibaraki to seek his wife Kayoko to rekindle with her and to write to the press about the malicious experiments conducted in the Unit 731. Ultimately, Ibaraki identifies his duty to express his internalised feelings which is essential to human life in maintaining robust relationships with reciprocal trust and honesty.

In essence, Christine Piper's *After Darkness* explores the prevalence of silence throughout Ibaraki's life and the several consequences it can result in. Moreover, Piper alters the trajectory of Ibaraki's down-spiral life as Ibaraki begins to fathom his own limitations and identify the cause of his major losses. The importance of opening up to those one cares about is thus illuminated on boldly and showcases both the effects from an individual standpoint.