APPENDICES

a. Biography of Haruki Murakami

Haruki Murakami was born Kyoto, Japan on January 12, 1949 is a contemporary Japanese writer. His books and stories have been bestsellers in Japan as well as internationally, with his work being translated into 50 languages and selling millions of copies outside his native country.

His works of fiction and non-fiction have garnered critical acclaim and numerous awards, both in Japan and internationally, including the World Fantasy Award (2006) and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award (2006), while his oeuvre received among others the Franz Kafka Prize (2006) and the Jerusalem Prize (2009). Murakami's most notable works include A Wild Sheep Chase (1982), Norwegian Wood (1987), The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle (1994-1995), Kafka on the Shore (2002), and IQ84 (2009–2010). He has also translated a number of English works into Japanese, from Raymond Carver to J. D. Salinger.

Murakami's fiction, still criticized by Japan's literary establishment as un-Japanese, was influenced by Western writers from Chandler to Vonnegut by way of Brautigan. It is frequently surrealistic and melancholic or fatalistic, marked by
aKafkaesque rendition of the "recurrent themes of alienation and loneliness" he weaves into his narratives. He is also considered an important figure in postmodern literature. Steven Poole of The Guardian praised Murakami as "among the world's greatest living novelists" for his works and achievements.

Murakami began to write fiction when he was 29. "Before that", he said, "I didn't write anything. I was just one of those ordinary people. I was running a jazz club, and I didn't create anything at all." He was inspired to write his first novel, Hear the Wind Sing (1979), while watching a baseball game. In 1978, Murakami was in Jingu Stadium watching a game between the Yakult Swallows and the Hiroshima Carp when Dave Hilton, an American, came to bat. According to an oft-repeated story, in the instant that Hilton hit a double, Murakami suddenly realized that he could write a novel. He went home and began writing that night. Murakami worked on Hear the Wind Sing for ten months in very brief stretches after working days at the bar. He completed the novel and sent it to the only literary contest that would accept a work of that length, winning first prize.

Murakami's initial success with Hear the Wind Sing encouraged him to continue writing. A year later, he published a sequel, Pinball, 1973. In 1982, he published A Wild Sheep Chase, a critical success. Hear the Wind Sing, Pinball, 1973, and A Wild Sheep Chase form the Trilogy of the Rat (a sequel, Dance, Dance, Dance, was written later but is not considered part of the series), centered on the same unnamed narrator and his friend, "The Rat." The first two novels are unpublished in English translation outside of Japan, where an English edition,
translated by Alfred Birnbaum with extensive notes, was published by Kodansha as part of a series intended for Japanese students of English. Murakami considers his first two novels to be "immature" and "flimsy", and has not been eager to have them translated into English. A Wild Sheep Chase, he says, was "the first book where I could feel a kind of sensation, the joy of telling a story. When you read a good story, you just keep reading. When I write a good story, I just keep writing."

b. Summary of the Norwegian Wood Novel

A 37-year-old Toru Watanabe has just arrived in Hamburg, Germany. When he hears an orchestral cover of the Beatles' song "Norwegian Wood", he is suddenly overwhelmed by feelings of loss and nostalgia. He thinks back to the 1960s, when so much happened that touched his life.

Watanabe, his classmate Kizuki, and Kizuki's girlfriend Naoko are the best of friends. Kizuki and Naoko are particularly close and feel as if they are soulmates, and Watanabe seems more than happy to be their enforcer. This idyllic existence is shattered by the unexpected suicide of Kizuki on his 17th birthday. Kizuki's death deeply touches both surviving friends; Watanabe feels the influence of death everywhere, while Naoko feels as if some integral part of her has been permanently lost. The two of them spend more and more time together going for long walks on Sundays, although feelings for each other are never clarified in this interval. On the night of Naoko's 20th birthday, she feels especially vulnerable and they have sex, during which Watanabe realizes that she
is a virgin. Afterwards, Naoko leaves Watanabe a letter saying that she needs some time apart and is quitting college to go to a sanatorium.

These events are set against a backdrop of civil unrest. The students at Watanabe's college go on strike and call for a revolution. Inexplicably, the students end their strike and act as if nothing had happened, which enrages Watanabe as a sign of hypocrisy.

Watanabe is befriended by a fellow drama classmate, Midori Kobayashi. She is everything that Naoko is not — outgoing, vivacious, and supremely self-confident. Despite his love for Naoko, Watanabe finds himself attracted to Midori as well. Midori reciprocates his feelings, and their friendship grows during Naoko's absence.

Watanabe visits Naoko at her secluded mountain sanatorium near Kyoto. There he meets Reiko Ishida, an older patient there who has become Naoko's confidante. During this and subsequent visits, Reiko and Naoko reveal more about their past: Reiko talks about the cause of her downfall into mental illness, and Naoko talks about the unexpected suicide of her older sister several years ago.

When he returns to Tokyo, Watanabe unintentionally alienates Midori through both his lack of consideration of her wants and needs, and his continuing thoughts about Naoko. He writes a letter to Reiko, asking for her advice about his conflicted affections for both Naoko and Midori. He does not want to hurt Naoko, but he does not want to lose Midori either. Reiko counsels him to seize this chance for happiness and see how his relationship with Midori turns out.
A later letter informs Watanabe that Naoko has killed herself. Watanabe, grieving and in a daze, wanders aimlessly around Japan, while Midori — with whom he hasn't kept in touch — wonders what has happened to him. After about a month of wandering, he returns to the Tokyo area and gets in contact with Reiko, who leaves the sanatorium to come visit. The middle-aged Reiko stays with Watanabe, and they have sex. It is through this experience, and the intimate conversation that Watanabe and Reiko share that night, that he comes to realise that Midori is the most important person in his life. After he sees Reiko off, Watanabe calls Midori to declare his love for her. Midori asks, "Where are you now?", and the novel ends with Watanabe pondering that question.