The Giver Study Guide

The Giver by Lois Lowry

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

When *The Giver* was first published in 1993, Lois Lowry was already a previous Newbery Medal winner (for her 1989 World War II novel, *Number the Stars).* She was also widely admired and greatly appreciated by an avid following of young readers for her comic series of Anastasia books. *The Giver* was immediately recognized as a very special novel. It too won the Newbery Medal. And a large number of commentators concluded that it was the best book Lowry had written.

Lowry's other work is mostly grounded in the cut and thrust of family life. The narrative of *The Giver,* because of the futuristic and allegorical themes in the novel, is a considerably more Spartan affair. Readers are made immediately aware that they are in the realm of fabulous rather than realistic fiction, and that Jonas is the principle player in a moral fable with political and social overtones.

Lowry spent a good part of her childhood living near the Amish people of Pennsylvania. Later she moved to Tokyo and lived in an American compound within the City. Both experiences seem to have made her suspicious of attempts by communities to protect a rigid self-identity. She is careful in *The Giver* to make the community she is describing extremely plausible. From many points of view, it represents a well-managed social order. But as the reader discovers, along with Jonas, more and more about the principles on which that social order is based-infanticide, enforced euthanasia-it becomes impossible to read the novel as anything other than a savage critique of such systems.

Author Biography

Lois Lowry was born March 20.1937. in Honolulu, Hawaii. Her parents, Katharine (Landis) and Robert E. Hammersberg (an army dentist). were separated at the onset of World War II. Lowry spent the war years in Pennsylvania. where her mother's family Lived. Early childhood influences included the presence of the Amish and an adoring grandfather. In 1948, when Lowry was eleven, the family was reunited in Japan, where her father was then stationed. In her 1994 Newbery Medal Acceptance Speech, she identified her experiences in Tokyo-living in the close confines of an American enclave named Washington Heights and making exciting forays on her bicycle into the Japanese streets-as amongst the significant memories which led to the writing of *The Giver.*

Lowry was educated at boarding school and Pembroke College. She attended Brown University but left after two years to marry an attorney, Donald Grey Lowry. She began writing seriously in the early 1970s, after all of her four children (born within a span of five years) were in high school. She was divorced in 1977, the year in which her first novel, *A Summer to Die,* was published. Prior to that, she had written two textbooks and a number of magazine articles and short stories.

This first novel described the relationship of two adolescent girls-thirteen-year-old Meg and her older sister, Molly, who is dying of leukemia. Meg gains sympathy and therapeutic friendship from an old neighbour, Will Banks, who encourages her interest in photography. (Lowry was. at the time of writing the novel, pursuing a parallel career as a semi-professional photographer. Her photographic work was used in a 1978 book called *Here in Kennebunkport* and on the dust jacket for *The Giver.)* The relationship between the two sisters in the novel also had a real-life correlation. Lowry's own elder sister, Helen, had died of cancer at a relatively young age.

Lowry's second novel, *Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye* (1978), confronted the issue of an adolescent, adopted child's search for her natural mother. but her third children's book was lighter in tone, and turned out to be the first in a series of comic novels about Anastasia Krupnik. In the first, eponymous title, Anastasia Krupnik is a feisty and rebellious ten-year-old. By the time the series had reached its ninth title-with *Anastasia, Absolutely* (l996)-she was an equally rebellious, but increasingly self-doubting thirteen-year-old.

Lowry had won several awards for previous novels, but it was her 1989 war novel, *Number the Stars,* which brought her her first really prestigious prize. the Newbery Medal. Set in Nazi occupied Denmark, the book tells about the adventures of ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen, as her family helps the resistance movement to convey Jews into the safety of neutral Sweden. The Newbery Medal was awarded to Lowry a second time for *The Giver,* a book completely unlike the Anastasia stories. Those, in the words of Michael Cart, writing in the *New York Times,* colorfully depict a "believably flourishing functioning family," whereas the Community in *The Giver* functions clinically, according to a strict set of principles. One by one the rules and routines of the Community are clearly delineated. Jonas's apprehension as his twelfth birthday (the end of childhood

and the time when the Chief Elder will announce individual Assignments) approaches is matched by the reader's growing unease at the description of community life.

Plot Summary

The Allure of a Perfect World

Lois Lowry's *The Giver* tells the story of Jonas, who lives in a futuristic society and who, until the age of twelve, has led a peaceful and normal, albeit regulated, life. Jonas has two parents, a mother who is happily employed at the Department of Justice, and a father who is happily employed as a Nurturer. He occasionally quarrels with his younger sister Lily, and he enjoys riding his bicycle, visiting with his friends Asher and Fiona, and musing about his future. In Jonas's world, everything (from an individual's desire, to the weather, to a person's career) is regulated. The community's rulers see to it, for example, that every member of this nameless, timeless community occupies a productive role in the society. The plot of *The Giver* develops out of Jonas's changing perceptions towards his community after he is selected to be the Receiver of Memory and discovers that nothing about his idyllic community is what it seems to be.

In Jonas's community, a child receives a professional assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, at which time s/he becomes an adult. Jonas, who has waited apprehensively to find out what his assignment will be, grows increasingly agitated during his long-awaited Ceremony. His friends have received desirable and appropriate assignments like "Fish Hatchery Attendant,"_ and "Assistant Director of Recreation,"' but it appears that he, Jonas, has been bypassed. Finally, after all of the other Twelves have received their assignments, Jonas learns that he, because the elders recognize his intelligence and courage, and because he has the "Capacity to See Beyond" (the ability to see colors), has been selected to become the next Receiver of Memory.

The Horror of a Perfect World

When Jonas is selected to become the next Receiver of Memory, his life is instantaneously altered. He had prepared himself to be separated from his friends, but Jonas had no way of preparing for the loneliness and challenges of his unexpected new job. The Chief Elder warns him at the Ceremony of Twelve, in front of all his friends and family, that his training will involve pain. "Physical pain... of a magnitude that none of us here can comprehend because it is beyond our experience."_ Jonas's friends all know what they are to become and what will become of them. Jonas's heart, however, is "filled with fear"; the last Twelve appointed to be Receiver of Memory failed.

Jonas's foreboding deepens when he receives his first training instructions. He learns that he is no longer allowed to share his dreams with anyone, and that he may lie. Both rules go against everything he has been taught up until this point. It feels like his world has been turned upside down. The only person who understands his fears is the current Receiver of Memory, a "bearded man with pale eyes,"' who tells Jonas to call him the Giver. The Giver's job is to consult his memories of "the whole world" in order to advise the Committee of Elders when they must come to a decision. The Committee of Elders

needs the Giver's guidance because they, not having any memories of the past, or of Elsewhere, cannot imagine a world other than it is, and therefore have trouble addressing "new" problems.

The Giver begins to transmit his memories to Jonas. He begins with pleasant memories of snow, sledding, sun, and sailing. Gradually, he adds memories of injuries, of war, of hate, of horrors. Jonas begins to feel irrational anger at his group mates, who are "satisfied with their lives which had none of the vibrance his own was taking on."' He is angry at himself, too, because "he could not change that [shallow living] for them."' Suddenly Jonas's family, who tell each other their dreams and share their feelings every day, begin to seem shallow. None of them have any comprehension of what Jonas has been learning every day. "They have never known pain,"' Jonas thinks one night. The realization makes him feel "desperately lonely."' When his mother says she feels sad, Jonas feels sadder because he "had experienced real grief," yet there is no "quick comfort" for how he feels, as there is for his mother's childish feelings. He begins to "lie easily" to his family about how pleasant his job is. In return, they smile and "lie easily,"' too. As Jonas begins to experience colors, and new sensations of both pain and pleasure, he grows more and more estranged from his community, and to feel increasingly disturbed. Who are his people, and how can they love if they lack depth of feelings and emotions and, even in a very fundamental way, choices?

Jonas's alienation from his community is complete when he witnesses, with the help of the Giver's closed-circuit television, his father "releasing" unwanted babies. Always before Jonas had assumed that babies who were released went "Elsewhere."' It had never occurred to him that his father gave babies who were different (because they were twins, or because they, like his baby stepbrother, Gabriel, were difficult to care for) a lethal injection. As one of two "enlightened" members of the community, Jonas now feels a terrible responsibility to right his community's wrongs. He decides to escape. He believes that, when he leaves, his memories will be transmitted to the other citizens; his community will, therefore, finally regain its links to the past.

Jonas's Escape

Jonas's plans to escape during the Ceremony of Twelve are foiled when he learns that his temporarily adopted brother, Gabriel, is in danger of being released. Motivated by his knowledge that release is a euphemism for death, Jonas steals his father's bicycle and, with Gabriel in tow, rides towards Elsewhere. Their journey is cold, dark, painful, and hungry. Jonas twists an ankle, has little to eat, and must do the best he can to care for the weakening Gabriel. His only comforts are the knowledge that all of his memories will be returned to the community, and his own memories of sunlight and warmth, which he shares with Gabriel.

Jonas finally comes to a sled on top of a hill, which he recognizes as the sled in his memory. He and Gabriel get onto the sled and sail toward Elsewhere. Writes Lowry,

The runners sliced through the snow and the wind whipped at his face as they sped in a straight line through an incision that seemed to lead to the final destination, the place that he had always felt was waiting, the Elsewhere that held their future and their past.

The novel's ending is ambiguous, but circular. Reunited with memories of light, snow, and sleds that the Giver gave him, reunited with memories of music, peace, joy, and freedom of choice that he found within himself, Jonas, along with Gabriel and the community that he left behind, has finally arrived in a better, more wholesome, place.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In this chapter we are introduced to Jonas, who is in his "elevens." He is anticipating with fear the "ceremony of Twelve." We are not told what that ceremony is, only that all children face this and it changes their lives. Jonas recalls another time that he felt frightened. He remembers "that deep, sickening feeling of something terrible about to happen." We participate in a memory last year when a jet over flew the community.

Jonas had ridden his bike to the landing field with other children to watch awkward round-bellied cargo planes unload supplies for the community. However, this was different. This was a sleek single-pilot jet. Jonas looked around to see that every one had stopped, confused, waiting for an explanation. The large speakers crackle to life. They order everyone to drop what they are doing and immediately go into the nearest building. Jonas obeys, running into his house where he looks out at the abandoned square. Relief comes as the speakers explain that a new pilot had lost his way. "Needless to say, he will be released," is the verdict. We learn that to be released was to be removed from the community. There were only three reasons to be released: the very old who could no longer contribute, the sickly very young who will not be able to contribute, and those who make mistakes or commit an act that is deemed serious enough for the ultimate punishment.

Jonas is part of a family two males, two females. There is father, mother and sister Lily, in her "sevens." We meet the family at the evening meal, where the ritual telling of feelings is shared. Each member describes an incident where they felt or displayed anger, frustration, or worry. Jonas explains feelings of apprehension for the "ceremony of Twelve."

Chapter 1 Analysis

The author brings us immediately into the mind of Jonas, an eleven year old boy. We listen in as he tries to determine what he is feeling. He is facing an unknown future. First he thinks he is frightened, then thinks back to the last time he was frightened. The routine of life was broken by an unexpected event, causing confusion. Jonas decides that fright is the wrong word substituting apprehension. Later, we learn that feelings are discussed every night at the evening meal.

The picture of the community seems at once familiar yet strange. Modern culture understands the reference to bicycles and planes, yet we don't understand the reason for fear when a plane over flies the common square. As the chapter unfolds, the differences begin to widen. We learn children do not have birthdays, per say, rather all children born that year are considered to age one year at the ceremony.

There is the word "released" used in an odd way, to be "released from the community." The assumption is the person released goes to join another community. Yet, there is no mention of any strangers joining this community.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

In Chapter 2 we learn that all children age a year in December. The ceremony for One is when the children are named. Children for a family must be applied for. One male, one female is awarded, about five years apart. The babies are raised in a nursery until the naming, when they are given to the parents that will raise them. We learn a little more about the importance of following the "Rules." Some rules are routinely broken. For example, children are not given a bicycle until the ceremony of Nine and are not to ride until then. However, older brothers and sisters often teach the younger to ride before that time.

Father is a Nurturer. His job is to care for the babies until they are brought to the ceremony of one and given a name and parents. Father is concerned about a male infant that is not thriving, and may be released. Father tells of breaking the rule of not naming a child by looking up the name assigned to the infant. Jonas is worried until he sees Mother smile. Father has received permission to bring "Gabriel" home at night for more personal care.

Rules can be changed by a committee. It is known that change moves very slowly, if at all. If the committee agrees that a rule should be changed, say lowering the age for bicycles, the final say goes the Receiver.

We learn that the ceremony of Twelve is when the children are assigned their life jobs. The elders observe the child, and then place them in a position that fits their interests and strengths. After the ceremony of Twelve, the child is considered an adult, and the yearly ceremony stops. Most adults don't know how old they are.

Chapter 2 Analysis

It is evident that the ceremony is a pivotal point for the children. Growth, independence, and new responsibilities change each year for all 50 children. They all move together into growth.

The elders are the authority of the community. They make the choice as to what position the child will ultimately fill as their life work. The elders are spoken of with respect and trust. However, it is a running joke that the board discussing rule changes will never decide. It is here that we learn of the Receiver, the highest authority and final say.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

We meet Gabriel for the first time when Father brings him home for the night. His comfort object is an imaginary animal called a hippo. Lily has one called an elephant. Children are given the comfort objects at birth. Then they give them up at the ceremony of Eight. The comfort objects are recycled to a new infant. Animals are unknown in this culture, considered imaginary.

Gabriel has pale eyes, as does Jonas. Pale eyes are rare. Lily makes a comment about becoming a birthmother, only to be sharply reprimanded by her mother. Birthmothers have three births - three years of comfort and luxury. Then they are laborers until they enter "the house of the Old."

Jonas thinks that Lily could be a Speaker, one who makes the announcements. Some announcements are delivered to the community, but directed at a single person. Such as the one "This is a reminder to male elevens that objects are not to be removed from the recreation area and that snacks are to be eaten, not hoarded"

Jonas had brought home an apple. He and Asher, his best friend, were playing catch with it. Jonas had seen the apple "change" as it was thrown. He brought it home to examine closely.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The new child Gabriel is introduced to the family. Jonas notices the pales eyes like his - a rarity in this community. He is not sleeping through the night, and could be released. The community will not accept anyone who does not conform to their idea of a member. Children are not born into the family, but birthed and kept until the ceremony of one. This would foster a strong feeling of a village - any of these children could be related to you. The community rules govern all aspects of behavior. Jonas finds this comforting, rather than restrictive.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Jonas is on his way to perform his required volunteer work. Each child in the community has a certain number of hours that they must help out in some function of the community. The child may choose where he/she spends their hours. Jonas' father spoke of spending all his hours in the Nurturers building, helping with the new infants. When his Twelve came the Elders decided to give him a Nurturer position. The elders watch the children through the years; their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. At the ceremony of Twelve, the child becomes an adult. Their future career is assigned to them by the elders.

Today Jonas is working at the "House of the Old." He learns that one of the members was released today. He wonders what the old one saw as he left the community. Jonas gives a bath to a woman. It is against the law to see others nakedness, but there are two exceptions, very young children and the very old, who cannot dress or clean themselves.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Volunteer hours would be a good way for the children to try out different jobs and find out what they have an affinity for. They would learn of the different way the community works, and what it takes to do certain job.

Jonas is merely curious about the man that was released. There is a lot of speculation among the children as to where those released go.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

It's a new morning, and the family is sharing the dream ritual. They share their dreams and discuss the feelings that may have produced those images. Jonas rarely shares, but last night his dream was vivid, leaving rather odd feelings. He dreamed of wanting to bathe with a female his age, but she would not... Upon father's questioning, Jonas says, "The wanting, I knew that she wouldn't…But I wanted it so terribly." Mother and Father react a little oddly to this dream. Father takes the sister, Lily, to school, and Mother tells Jonas she will write an apology to his instructor so that Jonas would not need to publicly apologize to the class for his lateness.

Jonas learns that his dream is part of "Stirring," and he will need to start taking a morning pill to control it. The stirring normally starts in Elevens. Some of Jonas' friends were already taking the pills. It was considered rude to discuss it, but Mother assured him it was okay. She gives him his first pill and by the time he arrives at school the stirrings are gone.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Jonas experiences what we know is a sign of puberty and sexual awareness. In this community, the pills subdue the sexual drive. This would stop the pressure of performance to impress the opposite sex, and change the focus of the culture. The rules require one to be polite to the community as a whole. Public apology is common. So we have children without biology (of the parents). Culture without the pressure to perform.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 opens with the family getting ready for the Ceremony. Lily fidgets while Mother ties the hair ribbons. Lily is impatient, and looking forward to tens. She will have her hair cut – no more ribbons.

Certain years of the ceremony brings new things to the children. First years get a name and a family. Fours receive a back-buttoned jacket to foster care for each other. Seven's had the first sign of independence when they were given the front – buttoned jackets. Lily became an eight this year, and proudly accepted the new jacket with smaller buttons and her first pockets. This was a sign that she was mature enough to keep track of her belongings. This is the year that they begin volunteer hours. By the time they are Twelve, they have had a chance to work at several different places and jobs.

The nines receive their first bicycle. The rules say that they are not to have ridden the bikes before that time, but most nines are able to hop on and pedal away. This rule is one that is always broken. Older siblings and friends teach the "eights" while the adults turn a blind eye. Tens make another step toward adulthood with shorter hair. The girl's long braids are cut, and the boy's hair is shortened to make self-care easier.

The Ceremony takes two days. Young Gabriel was not part of the "ones," getting another year to grow. He was labeled "uncertain" and given a reprieve instead of being labeled "Inadequate" and released from the community.

Finally the ceremony of "twelve's" arrives. Jonas and his friends nervously discuss what positions they will be given. If the child does not like the position given, the only choice is to ask for release. Then they can try again in another community.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The ceremony is essentially a "rite of passage." The children are given new toys or tools, clothes appropriate to their age. The culture expects the children to mature at the same rate. In reality, various images in the book tell us that it takes about 3 -4 years before the children are equal.

The "Nines" receive their first bicycle as the first step to adulthood. At ten, the childish hair styles are lost. At Twelve, they are considered adults.

There is no choice for one's position. We know that the Elders try to match the personalities and attributes to the job, but there are "urban legends" of children who rejected the choice made for them.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The elevens line up by the stage in the order of the numbers they were given at birth. Jonas was nineteen, meaning the nineteenth newchild born that year. His full number was eleven nineteen at the moment. That would soon change. After twelves, the adults rarely tracked their ages. When they felt ready, they asked for a Matching. They sometimes waited months or even years before a proper matching spouse was found. Later, they would apply for children, about five years apart; one male, one female, to make a complete family.

The Chief Elder spoke to the Elevens-almost-twelves; "This is the time when we acknowledge difference. You elevens have spent all your years till now learning to fit in, to standardize your behavior, to curb any impulse that might set you apart from the group. But today we honor your differences. They have determined your futures."

She went on to describe the various personalities within the group. She used no names, but the children knew who she was describing. Finally the assignments began. Called up in order of numbers, the children received the badges of their office.

Number eighteen, Fiona, smiled when assigned as caretaker of the old. She's spent many hours helping in the House of the Old. Her gentle and quiet nature was soothing to the elderly residents. Jonas tensed to stand when the number "Twenty" was called. He'd been skipped! He waited with increasing embarrassment while the rest of the Elevens walked to the stage, returning with the badges. The Elder had made a mistake.

Chapter 7 Analysis

All aspects of life in this community are regulated by the word of the Elders or community rules. From your career to your spouse, the choice is made for you. Many early cultures allowed little or no choice in the same way. You grew up in your Father's business or apprenticed to a Master; often chosen by the Father. If you were female and high-born, you had little choice in the matter of a husband. You were a political tool.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

When the last child walked back to his seat, the audience clapped without enthusiasm. There were mutters and questioning whispers. The elder turned to the audience, acknowledging their discomfort. "I have caused you anxiety, I apologize to my community."

"We accept your apology," was the chorused reply. The Elder continued, "Jonas has not been assigned, he has been selected." The Elder went on to explain that Jonas had been selected to be the next Receiver of Memory. She continues, referencing a mistake that was made ten years ago. She explains why it has taken so long to select a new receiver of memory.

The Receiver of memory is different from the community. Jonas' training will not be public, shared with the community; Jonas has not experienced being set apart from the group. The elder explains the requirements for a Receiver. They must be intelligent, courageous, have integrity, and wisdom. She finishes with the statement that the Receiver must have the ability to "See Beyond." She does not explain, and Jonas thinks about the apple that changed.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The community is confused – something is different. The Speaker publicly apologizers for causing discomfort, soothing the group. She called Jonas and explains that he has been "selected" to the highest position of honor in the community. Things will be different for Jonas. He will be alone, set apart from the group. He will experience pain, and not be able to get relief. He will be different.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

For the first time in his twelve years, Jonas felt apart from his friends and family. Asher did talk to him after the ceremony, but he used a different tone, one of uncertainty. That night over dinner Jonas's parents talked to him about his assignment. "It's not a Job really, there's only one Receiver." Jonas's Mother went on to tell of the failed Receiver of ten years ago. It was a female then. The failure was so bad her name would never be used again for a newchild, nor was it to be spoken out loud. This was one of the highest disgraces in the community; to have your name removed from the house of records, and never used again.

Preparing for bed Jonas opened the thin folder he had been given for his assignment. Inside there was a single printed sheet with his instructions for his training.

"JONAS RECEIVER OF MEMORY
1. Go immediately after school to the annex behind the house of old.

2. Go immediately to your dwelling at the conclusion of training each day

3. From this moment you are exempted from rudeness. You may ask any question of any citizen and you will receive answers

4. Do not discuss your training with any other member of the community, including parents and elders.

5. From this moment you are prohibited from dream-telling.

6. Except for illness or injury unrelated to your training, do not apply for any medication.

7. You are not permitted to apply for release.

8. You may lie."

This last one impressed Jonas the most. What if all others had gotten the same instructions? He and his group mates had been taught at a very young age not to lie; now he had permission. Jonas made a promise to himself not to take advantage of this strange rule.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The list for Jonas is entirely out of his experience. He can lie? Rudeness is no longer an issue. Also, he can get answers to any question. Jonas must come to terms with this

"honor" that sets him apart from the group. For twelve years he has learned to blend in, now he must stand out and alone.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The first day of training Jonas rode to the house of old with his friend Fiona. She had been assigned as a caretaker there. Jonas went around the building to the annex. Nothing was significant about the outside. Once inside he talked to the receptionist and she led him into the Receiver's office. The thing the caught his eye immediately was the wall of books. In his own house there were only the required books; a dictionary, a book which contained descriptions of every office, house building and committee, and The book of rules. The receiver looked like any other elder, except for his eyes. Jonas had those same piercing light eyes. He welcomed Jonas with a smile and asked him to call him Giver. Jonas was now the Receiver. The Giver talked to Jonas about his own training and how he felt as a twelve. The process was almost identical to what Jonas had been through. Jonas tried to understand. "Sir, is this all we will be doing? Telling me of your childhood? Meaning no disrespect, but I could do a regular job and come listen afterwards. I would like that very much." The Giver shook his head "it is not my memories I will give you Jonas, It is the memories of the world, the memories of before you, me and all receivers past." Jonas was confused. He'd never known a world outside of his community. "I'm so weighted with all the memories it will be nice to let some of them go. It's like going downhill in a sled, at first you have speed, crisp air all downhill, but then the snow builds up in the runners and you slow down having to drag the sled back uphill." Jonas was now more confused than ever "sled? What's that?" The Giver smiled "come lie on this couch and take off your shirt." Jonas did so. The Giver placed his hands on Jonas's back. "I'm going to give you snow."

Chapter 10 Analysis

Jonas and his friends had spoken of other communities, but never speculated that they would be any different than the one here. The Receiver spoke of things that Jonas could not comprehend.

The Receiver told Jones that he was now to be the Giver, as Jonas would be the receiver. The Giver is passing on memories. They were memories of things that no longer exist in the community, like cold snow. These are memories not shared by the general community. Jonas will be the keeper of history.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Jonas closed his eyes. He felt the touch of the old mans hands on his back get colder. The air around him changed, getting harder to breathe. He felt pinpricks all over his body. He stuck out his tongue and got a cold surprise. Smiling he did it again and again, each one turning to water in his mouth. Part of him knew that he was just lying on a couch in a room with the Giver, but a separate part of him felt and saw himself sitting on a sled at the top of a hill. These new words came to him as he looked at them. The sled ride was exhilarating, Jonas wanted more. The Giver promised it as a treat for another time. Jonas was a flood of questions. "Why don't we have those things?" The Giver explained that snow made it hard to grow food, and hills hindered transportation.

The Giver silenced Jonas, "I want to give you another memory, this time I won't tell you the name; you should be able to perceive it on your own." Jonas lay back down and the Giver started. Jonas felt the warmth start on his neck and travel over his body. "Sunshine," he told the Giver as he opened his eyes. Jonas asked the Giver about the painful things the Elder had mentioned. "Maybe another day, you've just started." The Giver was reluctant to hurt Jonas so soon. Jonas was firm though he wanted to prove his bravery. The Giver gave Jonas a memory of sunburn. Jonas woke with his skin still stinging from the pain. "I understand now thank you sir, see you tomorrow"

Chapter 11 Analysis

Many things were lost in order to make life easier. The weather was tamed, and the land made flat. People no longer needed to feel pain for more than the time it took to call for relief. Jonas had never known snow, but recognized sunshine. He was surprised by the pain of sunburn. We may assume that no one in his knowledge ever had sunburn.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The next morning Jonas's mother asked him if he had any dreams while he slept. Thinking of the dream he'd had of snow, he told her he'd slept soundly. His Father made a comment about Gabriel not sleeping through the night. Mother agreed he'd woken them up in the middle of the night crying. School was a little different that day. Classes were the same but breaks and lunch were filled with twelves buzzing about their first day of training. After school he again rode with Fiona to the house of old. As Fiona went into the house of old Jonas was startled. A change had happened again, this time with Fiona's hair. It had been just a glimpse, but he was sure he'd seen something. He decided to ask the Giver about it

The Giver smiled as Jonas entered his room. When Giver commented that Jonas was one minute late, Jonas started to apologize, then remembered the giver had said they didn't have time for apologies in this room. He tried to explain to the Giver what had happened with both the apple and Fiona's hair. The Giver thought a little and asked Jonas if he'd looked around in the memory of the sled. Jonas shook his head. He'd only felt the sled underneath him as he went racing down the hill.

The Giver suggested that they do a test. He told Jonas to lie on the couch again. Jonas did so and waited for the giver's hands on his back. They didn't come, instead the Giver told Jonas to conjure up the memory. Jonas was a little confused. "Don't you have to give me the memory?" The Giver replied "I already have. It's in your head not mine, now concentrate." As Jonas did the sled was suddenly under him. He was delighted and actually looked around this time. He was startled to see himself, his hands holding a rope, his legs blocked view of the sled beneath him. Moving his legs he was dumbfounded. This was not a simple glimpse of the change; the sled was different. Opening his eyes Jonas looked questioningly at the Giver. The Giver sighed and told Jonas that he was beginning to see the color red. While Jonas tried to grasp the concept of color, The Giver got an idea. "Lie back down Jonas. I'm going to give you a rainbow."

Chapter 12 Analysis

We learn that no one sees in color in this community, other than the Giver and receiver. In the push to be the same, even colors had to be muted to shades of gray. The Giver teaches Jonas how to retrieve the memory of Snow given the day before.

Should we assume that the community does not retain memory? Yet, the children learn in school. Twelves are learning their positions. Perhaps the ability to recall in vivid detail has been muted with the colors. It is said that newborns only see in black and white, then red. Jonas is seeing the world with an infant's sight.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Weeks went by and Jonas learned the names of all the colors which he'd begun to see. Jonas asked the Giver why color had been taken away from the community. It had been a decision the elders made before the first receiver, to remove colors from the community. This made life easier with fewer choices to make. One morning after that, Jonas tried an experiment to give his friend Asher an awareness of red. He asked Asher to look at some flowers while he touched him. All that came out of it was that Asher became uneasy around Jonas that week. That day the Giver gave Jonas a memory of an Elephant laying on the ground without its tusks, its mate grieving over the corpse. That night Jonas tried to share the elephant memory to his sister and Father. But neither one got anything out of it.

One day Jonas asked the Giver if he'd ever had a spouse. The Giver did have one; she now lived with the childless adults. This conversation turned into one on rules and what the Receiver actually does in the community. Sometimes the council calls on the Receiver for advice on matters they do not understand.

Some days Jonas would walk into the room to find the Giver hunched over in pain. He knew these days he would be sent home with nothing more than "I'm in pain go away." One day Jonas suggested that the Giver give him some of the painful memories, so his load wouldn't be so heavy. The Giver agreed, knowing that Jonas would have to bear them all some day. Jonas lay on the couch and the Giver started with the sled memory.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Jonas is becoming more isolated from the experiences of the group. He tries to reach out and share some of his new way of seeing, but his friends and family do not understand.

The elders have chosen, in the interests of "making life easier" to blunt and dull what we would consider normal life. No major changes or upsets no frustration from too many choices. I wonder if those stressed by modern life might find a lack of choice peaceful? There is a trend in American culture for less freedom, fewer choices; a "Daddy knows best" attitude from the leadership. Is this a good trend?

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Jonas grinned with delight as he sat atop the sled he now knew well. The landscape was a little different this time, the snow not as soft, the hill a little steeper. Speeding down the hill the sled hit a bump, knocking Jonas off into the air. He came down hard on the ice, breaking his leg and scraping his face bloody. He awoke on the familiar couch whimpering he looked at the Giver with tears in his eyes. He asked for a relief-of-pain. The Giver shook his head. Jonas limped home, his face feeling raw and body bruised. His father asked him if he wanted a relief-of-pain, but Jonas remembered his rules; no meds for training pains.

Now Jonas's days included many painful memories. The Giver tried to lessen them a little with pleasant ones directly following. Jonas asked why these memories couldn't be shared throughout the community. The pain would be less and the joy shared. The Giver agreed but the council did not The Giver explained that Jonas and he were there to take the pain for everyone else.

The extra time Father had been putting in with Gabriel was paying off. His motor skills were developing nicely. His weight was going up. During the talk around the table, Father mentioned that Identical twins were on their way. Mother looked concerned, "will you be the next to release one of them?" To make things simpler, the council got rid of one twin.

Even with the progress Father had made with Gabriel, he still wasn't sleeping through the night. Jonas suggested putting Gabe in his room for a night. During the night when Gabe cried, Jonas accidentally transferred a memory of sailing to Gabe while trying to calm him down. This scared him. He decided not to tell anyone.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Jonas's training has become painful, as the Giver passes sorrowful and painful memories to him. Jonas wonders why the community doesn't share these. There would be less pain, and others would know joy as he does. Jonas has realized that the community does not truly have emotions, only a pale copy of anger, love, or happiness. Earlier, the Giver explains that when the previous receiver was released, the memories she'd been given spread into the community, causing distress, pain, and panic. This upset the routine of the community, proving to the Elders that the correct choice had been made to "protect" the people.

Jonas discovers accidentally that Gabriel is also a receiver. Perhaps the pale eyes was a physical display of this ability.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

One day when Jonas walked into the Annex he knew this would be a day he would be sent away. Instead the Giver looked at Jonas and pleaded him to take some of the pain away. Jonas agreed with fervor and lay down on the couch. The Giver gave Jonas a long hard memory of war. Pain, death and destruction were everywhere. He watched a boy his age die right next to him. Finally, when he was begging for death himself, he woke up with a start. The Giver jerked his hands off Jonas and sobbed "forgive me." Jonas was still in shock to speak.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Jonas gets his first taste of how ugly war and death can be. The question still begs, "Is it better for one person to suffer intensely; or to spread the misery through the community, coloring the culture?"

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

After that, Jonas was reluctant to go back to the Annex. The next couple of days the Giver was very gentle with Jonas. All memories were of happy things; a birthday party, museums. He even went riding for an afternoon and was introduced to the bonds between animal and man. Jonas asked the Giver about his favorite memory. The Giver gave it willingly. It was a Christmas party with family and grandparents. There was joy on everyone's faces as they opened up their presents. It was with this memory that Jonas experienced love.

That night Jonas asked his parents "do you love me?" They replied with amusement chastising him for an inappropriate use of words. They told him they were proud of his accomplishments and that they enjoyed his company. His mother asked him if he understood why "love" was an inappropriate term. He replied" yes, thank you I do"

It was the first lie to his parents. The next morning Jonas did not take his pill. Something inside him had told him to throw the pill away.

Gabriel had been sleeping so well in Jonas' room that the nurturers decided he could come back to the nursery. But in the nursery, the infant cried and would not sleep through the night. So he was returned to Jonas' room. We learn that Jonas has been transferring peaceful memories to Gabriel to help him sleep.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Jonas learns of the old style family unit, with three or four generations together. He witnesses the love between the members. He is confused until the Giver names the emotion. This community does not keep families intact. When the children grow up, the parents move to the childless adult's area. There is little or no contact with the grown children. The family unit is sacrificed for the community unit.

When Jonas asks his parents if they love him, they respond with amusement and correction. "Love" is an imprecise word, they explain – so generalized and meaningless that the word is rarely used.

Jonas is developing a connection with Gabriel, something that is against the rules. At the ceremony of one Gabriel will be officially named and given to another family. Jonas has learned love, and seems to be unable to reject those feelings for the baby.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

"TODAY IS AN UNSCHEDULED HOLIDAY," was the announcement from the speaker one morning. Everyone rejoiced, no school for the kids meant they could play.

Jonas could see colors now and keep them. He had seen oceans, mountains, and canyons. These were things no one in the community had dreamed of. While out in the field playing with Asher and his friends, Jonas realized that they were playing war games. Jonas asked them to stop playing. He understood the pain of war. The other children were irritated when Jonas wouldn't join in the play.

Jonas understood more clearly that his friends and family didn't understand what real emotion was. They experienced only a pale shadow. Back at the house Lily started a conversation on babies. They talked about Gabriel, and the twins who still hadn't been born.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Again, Jonas is forced to see his differences from his family and friends. Jonas knows that what he feels for his family and friends Asher and Fiona is love. But he also realizes that they are incapable of love, or any strong emotion.

That evening the discussion turns to the impending release of one of the twins. The elders long ago decided that having identical twins would be too complicated. Lily chants "One for here, One for elsewhere." Jonas asks for a detailed explanation from his Father. Father explains that he will weigh the babies, then perform a ceremony of release for the smaller infant. He would then wave "bye bye." Jonas is unsatisfied with this, and asks if someone will be taking the child to the new community. Father replies. "of course."

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Jonas asked the Giver about release the next day. The Giver replied that sometimes he wished he could apply for release but couldn't until Jonas was trained. That rule had not been in effect until the failure ten years ago with the female receiver. She couldn't handle the emotional pain the Giver had to transfer. He had loved her and tried to give her happy memories, but like Jonas, she knew her duty was to handle all the memories good and bad. She couldn't handle the painful memories and asked for release. All her memories came back to the people. Most were happy, but the sad ones upset the community. After, that the council added the no release rule to the list for Jonas.

Jonas mentioned that if he died, would all his memories would come floating back to the people. Would they have to remember things for themselves? The Giver looked a little troubled at Jonas's remark and asked him to be careful.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The discussion of release includes more detail about the female receiver who couldn't finish her training. When she choose to be released, the memories transferred to her came back to the community. We are not told if those memories eventually went back to the receiver or if the community absorbed them. Jonas is feeling the pressure, and wonders what it would be like if the community handled their own emotions. Again we have the theme of one suffering for the community.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Jonas mentioned to the Giver that his Father was releasing one of the twins today. He wished he could watch. The Giver asked his secretary to play back the video from that morning. Jonas saw his Father weighing both babies. The bigger one went off to a nurse to be taken care of. The other was laid on a table while Father got out a syringe out from the cupboard and filled it with a liquid that had been prepared earlier. He injected it into the twin and stood there while the child spacemen and became still. Jonas recognized the expression from a memory and realized his Father had killed the baby. He was horrified.

The Giver commented about the previous receiver's release. She asked to inject herself.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Every child comes to a time when they realize that parents have not always been honest. Subjects that range from the benign – like the tooth fairy, to the mysterious – like where babies come from. That feeling of betrayal is often the first time the child knows the parent is not invincible or perfect. For Jonas, he not only learned that his Father lied, but committed murder.

Add to that the understanding that "release" was not, as the children thought, a move to elsewhere, but death. This could apply to change. Any change is a sort of death to the past, and a move to the new.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Jonas had a tantrum on the couch. "I won't go home you can't make me!" he kept screaming. The Giver said he'd allow him to stay there that night. He called his secretary and asked her to notify Jonas's family unit. Jonas kept going on about how his Father had lied to him. He was also worried about Fiona and how she'd take the release thing. The Giver informed him that Fiona was already schooled in the ways of release. As they ate they concocted a plan for Jonas to escape to elsewhere. Jonas asked the Giver to come with him again and again, but the giver knew with Jonas gone the people would need someone to turn to.

The next morning Jonas went home to his family cheerfully lying about being busy all night. In school Jonas went over the plan in his head over and over. Over the next two weeks the Giver would transfer every memory of courage and strength he could. They would hoard food and Jonas would leave at midnight.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This is where Jonas must come to terms with his feelings. The Giver reminds him that he and Jonas are the only ones who really have feeling. The others simply do as they are told – to "release infants, elderly and three-time rule breakers." Jonas realizes that this arrangement must stop. He plans to leave. The Giver will not go with him.

When Jonas leaves, the memories he carries will come back to the community. The Giver feels he must stay to help the community work through the transition. These two are, in effect, planning to change their culture. There are no other children old enough with the pale eyes to be a receiver. The community will be forced to bear the memories.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Jonas was hunched on his father's bicycle with Gabriel on the back in a child seat. He found out that Gabriel was up for release in the morning. He left the community with stolen food and his father's bike. That was three major transgressions against him, enough for them to release him. Before he left, Jonas transmitted the most soothing memory he had, one of sitting on a hammock, swaying gently in the breeze. They stopped after a while and had breakfast. Jonas took Gabe back into some trees to sleep during the day so the planes wouldn't find them. He transferred a memory of deep contented exhaustion and Gabriel fell right to sleep. Every day they slept, every night they traveled. Jonas always kept a sharp eye out for planes as they searched for them; diving into the bushes whenever he heard one. Then there came a time when he stopped hearing planes at all.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The plans to leave were moved forward quickly when Jonas learned that Gabriel was going to be released. Jonas stole his father's bike with the infant seat, and left that evening. He abandoned the life he knew. "The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life with out color, pain, or past."

Jonas committed the unthinkable – leaving in the night, with stolen food, on a stolen bike, with a condemned child. There was no turning back. He had to leave without the memories of strength and courage the Giver planned to pass on. Jonas demonstrated impressive individual strength as he dodged search planes, sleeping during the day and pushing on at night. He did not know where he was going, only away.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

The landscape was changing and the road becomes more difficult to ride on. Jonas's bike caught on something and he fell. His first instinct was to reach for Gabriel, but fortunately, Gabriel was strapped to the seat and didn't get hurt. Jonas traveled in the daytime now with no fear of planes. He'd hurt his ankle falling, and stopped at every stream to soak it.

On their way to a new life Jonas and Gabriel saw much wildlife. He and Gabe were starving slowly, Jonas tried to give Gabe as many memories of food as he could but as soon as the memory faded, they were both hungry again. Jonas no longer cared for himself. He just wanted to get Gabriel to a safe haven so he could live out his life.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Jonas is discovering a world that he had only glimpsed through old memories. Now it was real – and painful. He debated if he had made the right choice, where he would not be hungry or hurt. The conclusion was that he'd rather do this than live without color, feelings, or love. There are many hard choices in life. Some include walking into pain, knowing it is the better choice in the long run.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

They encountered snow. Jonas kept pedaling concerned only for Gabriel's well being. He tried to give the baby every scrap of heat and warmth, leaving none for himself. Eventually he abandoned the bike, for the snow had gotten to thick to ride through. Wrapping Gabe up in a blanket as tight as he could Jonas trudged on foot up a never ending hill. Upon reaching the summit of the hill Jonas found the sled that was waiting for them. Seating himself and Gabe they started down the hill. Faster and faster he went, with certainty that whoever was at the bottom was waiting with open arms for him and the baby. For the first time he thought he heard music, but maybe it was just an echo.

Chapter 23 Analysis

The author leaves uncertainty about the ending of this story. It is unclear whether Jonas experiencing real life or reliving one last happy memory before death.

Characters

Andrei

As with all the characters, in the novel, Andrei is mentioned only by his first name. A contemporary of Jonas's father, he became an engineer and designed the bridge that crosses the river to the west of the community.

Asher

Asher is Jonas's best friend. He has a habit of mixing up his words; a habit which early chastisement with the Discipline Wand at the age of three did not eradicate. In one recollected scene, he asks for a "smack" instead of a "snack" and is repeatedly hit. This treatment caused him to stop talking altogether for a time, but essentially he remains an easygoing boy with a good sense of fun. At the ceremony of Assignment, he is made Assistant Director of Recreation, an occupation which everyone feels will be entirely appropriate for him. After Jonas has been assigned to The Giver, the two friends fallout, Asher not being able to understand Jonas's objections to a goodies-baddies game he has been playing with friends.

Benjamin

Benjamin is the same age as Asher and Jonas. For the past four years he has done his voluntary service after school in the Rehabilitation Center, where he has devised important new equipment.

Bruno

A very minor character. The brother of Fiona, a girl Jonas is especially fond of.

Caleb

Caleb is described as a replacement child. In Chapter 6 he is presented to a couple in place of their previous child, who had wandered off and fallen into the river. Fatal accidents, such as this, are rare in the Community. The choice of the same name for the replacement child is quite intentional. At the time of the Original Caleb's loss, the entire community joined together in a slowly fading murmur of the drowned boy's name. Since then it has been used by no one. Then, at the naming ceremony of the new Caleb, the murmuring begins again, this time increasing in volume, "as if the first Caleb were returning."

Chief Elder

The Chief Elder, elected every eleven years, is the leader of the community, and responsible for addressing the annual ceremonies, at the culmination of which the Assignments are announced. The Chief Elder announcing Jonas's Assignment is female.

Edna

Edna is an old person who has been recently "released." She had been a Birthmother, and then worked for years in Food Production, without forming a family unit.

Father

For most of the time the reader is entirely sympathetic towards Jonas's father. He works as a Nurturer, looking after very young children before their naming and allocation to family units. His concern for one baby boy, Gabriel, who is not progressing well, is touching, especially when he decides to bring the child home for several weeks in order to build up his body weight. This gesture is thoroughly approved by Jonas. But total disillusion with his father sets in, when Jonas discovers the truth about "release," and witnesses his father's casual, businesslike approach towards deciding the fate of a pair of twins, only one of whom is allowed to grow up in the Community.

Fiona

Fiona is in the same year-group as Jonas and Asher. She and Jonas are special friends and often cycle to places together. She does all her voluntary work in the House of the Old and is officially made a Caretaker of the Old at her twelfth Ceremony. As a Caretaker she becomes party to the true meaning of "release" but, unlike Jonas, accepts it as the way of the community.

Fritz

Fritz is a clumsy boy who lives next door in Jonas. He receives a new bicycle at the ceremony of Nine, in Chapter 6, and immediately bumps into the podium with it. Jonas and his parents fear that the new bike will "probably too often be dropped on the front walk instead of wheeled neatly into its port." Fritz is a minor character but is used to emphasize the community's obsession with order and conformity. Minor infringements, such as shoes on the wrong feet, become major transgressions in such a world.

Gabe

See Gabriel

Gabriel

One of the children being "nurtured" by Jonas's father is not putting on weight The boy is in danger of being declared "inadequate" and hence being set aside for "release." The father's concern is genuine. He secretly discovers the name that has been allotted to the child (Number Thirty-six in his year group), and uses it prior to the naming ceremony, hoping it will help the little fellow's development. In Chapter 3 Jonas's father actually brings the baby home at night, together with the child's comfort object (a hippo), and later he successfully lobbies for "Oabe" to be granted an additional year of nurturing.

Gabriel is pale-eyed. Although Jonas is also pale-eyed, this is a rarity in the Community. There is a suggestion that the two of them may have shared the same birth-mother. Certainly a fraternal bond develops between them, especially after Jonas offers to let Gabriel sleep in his room, so that he can be the one to comfort him in the night, if necessary, his Mother and Father having become worn out.

On being transferred for a trial night back to the Nurturing Center, Gabriel cries inconsolably, and it is decided he shall, after all, be "released." This announcement, at a family evening meal, forces Jonas to bring forward his planned escape. He races away from the community on his Father's bike, with Gabriel in the child-seat on the back.

Giver

The Giver is fair-eyed, like Jonas, and like the previous Receiver, a girl called Rosemary. The Giver claims Rosemary as his daughter.

In her Newbery acceptance speech, Lowry talked about a painter she had met in 1979, while working on an article in a magazine. Something fascinated Lowry about the painter's face, especially his eyes. "Later I hear that he has become blind. I think about him-his name is Carl Nelson-from time to time. His photograph hangs over my desk. I wonder what it was like for him to lose the colors about which he was so impassioned. I wish, in a whimsical way, that he could have somehow magically given me the capacity to see the way he did." (Lowry's photograph of Carl Nelson was used on the front cover of the first American edition of the novel.)

The Giver, who describes himself as not as old as he looks, provides Just such a magical transfer of powers. He has been made tired by the burden of knowledge and memories, the assimilation and storage of which have consumed his life. As soon as Jonas meets him (in Chapter 10), The Giver is at pains to point out that it is not the memory of nostalgia-not the recollections of childhood normally indulged in by the old-that he must transmit. "It's the memories of the whole world."

His apartment is book-lined, at first giving the impression that The Giver's knowledge is professorial, and that the relationship between him and Jonas will be one of sage and student. But this impression is quickly undermined when The Giver announces that he

is going to transmit the memory of snow. This involves a ritualistic laying on of hands and an extra-sensory simulation of the sensation of cold.

After similar transmissions, both pleasurable and painful, The Giver concludes his education of Jonas in a very different fashion. He shows him a videotape recording of a "Release," and then, clearly having become opposed to the community himself, helps Jonas plan an escape.

Inger

Inger is described as "a nice girl, though somewhat lazy, with a strong body." Number Two in Jonas's year, she is made a Birthmother.

Instructor

A minor, anonymous character, who receives Asher's apology for lateness in the opening chapter.

Isaac

Another minor character, only mentioned in the course of the Ceremony, in Chapter 7. He is made an Instructor of Sixes (children aged six), an Assignment which "obviously pleased him and was well-deserved."

Jonas

Jonas, the main character of the novel, unlike his friend Asher, is careful about language. He searches for the right words to describe his feelings The opening of the book establishes him as aged eleven, apprehensive about the approaching December, when the annual Ceremony will be held, and Assignments will be given to all those in his year group.

He gets on reasonably well with his peers and has friends of both sexes (Asher and Fiona). But he feels different. Physically he has pale eyes, whereas nearly everybody else has brown eyes. Other eleven-year-olds are able to predict their likely Assignments, which are chosen on the basis of observed inclinations and aptitudes. Jonas has developed no special interest (he visits the House of the Old only to be with Fiona, who is dedicated to her work there) and has no idea what the Elders will consider him cut out to become-hence his apprehensiveness.

Apart from this, Jonas conforms well. He shares his family's distaste for Isaac, the clumsy and untidy boy who lives next door. Numbered Nineteen in his year group, Jonas has a long wait at the Ceremony, while the lower numbers receive their Assignments. All are given predictable and aptly chosen tasks in life. His nervousness

mounts. The tension (both for Jonas and for the reader) becomes almost unbearable when the Chief Elder skips Jonas's number. His is the last Assignment to be announced. It is entirely unexpected, and hugely daunting Jonas has been selected as the next Receiver of Memory.

As such he has to spend many hours every day in the company of an old man who is the current holder of Memories. The old man calls himself The Giver in the course of their sessions, Jonas's eyes are opened to many things-initially wonderful, pleasurable things, then increasingly painful things. Eventually he sees that the Community is based on cruel falsehoods-none more cruel than the ceremony of Release, which turns out to be the application of a lethal injection. He watches a video of his father dispatching one of two twins in this way, and he and the Giver plan an escape.

The planned escape has to be put in motion prematurely, so that Jonas can save the young child, Gabriel. They flee the community together and in the final pages of the book struggle through harsh terrain and elements, finally sledding down a snowy slope towards twinkling, colored lights. The book ends with readers having to make up their own minds whether Jonas and Gabriel survive, and if so in what kind of environment.

Larissa

Larissa is one of the old people. Jonas helps to bathe her in Chapter 4. Later, in Chapter 14, the reader learns that Larissa, who had memorable sparkling eyes and a soft voice, has been "Released." Jonas, at this stage, does not know the truth about "Release" and imagines her in the pleasant land of Elsewhere.

Lily

Lily is Jonas's little sister, four years younger than him. She still has a comfort object-a stuffed elephant.

Madeline

Significant for being Number One in Jonas's year group and therefore the first to receive an Assignment. She is made a Fish Hatchery Attendant.

Mother

Jonas's Mother holds a prominent position at the Department of Justice and is depicted as being more concerned about her job than about raising children. Early in the book she is distracted with thoughts about a court case in which she might be required to release a repeat offender. Later in the book she is only too glad to let Jonas look after Gabriel at night so that she can be refreshed for work.

Natasha

A very minor character, mentioned by Lily in Chapter 3. Natasha does her voluntary hours at the Birthing Center.

Philippa

Philippa is the female child in Asher's family unit; in the community's terms, his sister. She has no other part to play in the story.

Pierre

Pierre is numbered Twenty, to Jonas's Nineteen. Jonas has never liked Pierre. He is "serious, not much fun, and a worrier and tattletale, too." After Jonas's number has been skipped, he does not even hear what Assignment Pierre is given.

Receiver

See Giver

Roberto

An old person who has played a prominent part in the life of the community. He has worked as an Instructor of Elevens; has served on the Planning Committee; and was responsible for the landscaping of the Central Plaza. Despite these services, his "release" passes without notice, and when the name "Roberto" is re-assigned there is no Murmur-of-Replacement ritual.

Rosemary

Rosemary was the last person selected to be Receiver of Memories, some ten years ago. After five weeks, distressed by the painful memories passed on by The Giver, she had gone to the Chief of Elders and requested Release (forbidden in Jonas's rules, but not in hers). On her demise, the five weeks' worth of memories had come back to the people, causing them much anguish. The outcome is remembered as a terrible failure.

In Chapter 20 The Giver tells Jonas, in a dramatic declaration, that Rosemary was his daughter. Whether he means this figuratively or literally is another matter readers will decide for themselves.

Speaker

The Speaker is the person who makes all public announcements to the Community. Every room in every building has a loudspeaker which remains permanently switched on so that such messages can be assured transmission. It is a mark of The Giver's stature that he is able to turn his loudspeaker on or off, as he wishes.

Tanya

Another eleven/twelve year old, she is amongst those playing the game of goodies and baddies with Asher.

Thea

Another female in Jonas's year group, briefly mentioned in Chapter 6.

Yoshiko

A friend of Jonas's father, given as an example of someone who was surprised but thrilled by her Assignment (Doctor).

Themes

Coming of Age

A key characteristic of the particular community Lowry has created is the annual ritual in December when each year group, en masse, is declared one year older and given commensurate privileges and/or responsibilities. At the age of three, all children begin participating in the daily routine of "dream-telling"-the requirement that, at the breakfast table, they describe the dreams they have had the previous night. It is also the age at which, educationally, the correct use of language is inculcated, regardless of individual development or speech skills. (Asher, who has specific problems with what educationists now call "word retrieval," has a good deal of trouble with this regime.) Up to the age of six, children wear jackets which fasten at the back. When they become seven they are given a front-fastening costume, as a mark of increasing independence. At the age of eight their "comfort object" is taken away. They are given another new jacket, this time with pockets: to indicate that they are now considered responsible enough to look after small belongings. And they must begin doing voluntary service outside of school hours. At the age of nine, girls remove their hair ribbons, and all children receive their own bicycle. At ten both boys and girls have their hair ceremoniously cut, and at eleven boys are given long trousers and girls "new undergarments."

But by far the most important rite of passage, and the one Jonas is in a permanent state of anxiety about in the early part of the book, is connected with becoming Twelve. This is the last time children are actively involved in the annual ceremony. After twelve, age is not considered important. Twelve is the age at which childhood is left behind, and an individual's adult calling is decided. Jonas is anxious because he has no idea what that calling is to be it will be decided by the Elders and announced by the Chief Elder at the Ceremony.

There are two more Rites of Passage unrelated to age They relate to Sex and Death.

Sex

Procreation is a purely mechanical affair in the community. If a girl is selected at the age of twelve to become a "Birthmother," she will eventually spend three years at the Birthing Center, giving birth to three babies The babies are not brought up by their natural mothers but allocated to volunteer parents. No details are given as to the practical means of fathering children, but it is most likely to be by artificial insemination, Since all sexual longing is eradicated at puberty, at the first sign of erotic dreaming. Indeed, the main purpose of "dream-telling" is revealed to be the monitoring of "Stirrings"-the term given to sexual desire. When Jonas confesses one morning to an erotic dream, he is immediately prescribed a daily pill to purge such stirrings. Later in the book, when he stops taking this pill, it is a sign to the reader of open rebellion.

Death

The community refers to Death, euphemistically, as Release. The young are allowed to take this literally, believing that those "Released" are simply choosing to leave the community and go "Elsewhere." Release is the final Rite of Passage. A ceremony is held, which includes a "telling of the life," a toast, an anthem, a good-bye speech from the individual to be released (where appropriate), some farewell speeches from those who know him or her, then a walk through the door to the Releasing Room.

Not only the old enter the Releasing Room. Any infants that do not thrive are also sent there, as are persistent transgressors against the community's petty codes. Jonas eventually sees a video recording of what happens in the Releasing Room and discovers that the room is the scene of sordid executions. Individuals are given a lethal injection and their bodies disposed of down a garbage chute. His father's jaunty participation in the execution of an infant twin is particularly shocking.

The horrible truth of what goes on behind the door of the Releasing Room underpins any of the positive constructs defenders of the community might wish to put forward. Its social cohesion, its emphasis on law and order, its insistence that children develop at the same pace-all these are dependent upon infanticide, enforced euthanasia, and a justice system which administers the death penalty without qualm.

Difference

The community's weather is unvarying. Regulated by "Climate Control," it is in an unfluctuating state of "Sameness," so that amongst the first memories passed on to Jonas by the Giver, are the memories of snow and sunshine. The grey, climatic "sameness" is an objective correlative of the community's strict regulation of difference and variety in all walks of life. The system of Assignments pays some regard to the temperamental and attitudinal differences between children. Observed through the early years of life, they are usually given an assignment that tallies with their chosen hobbles or interests. A child who likes to play with a construction set and does his volunteer hours on building sites, for example, is given the Assignment of Engineer. However, in effect, this makes children the victims of their early predilections. There is no recognition that individuals might develop different interests. Those first interests must become their life's work, to be pursued without change.

There are many other aspects of community life which enforce sameness-all family groups, for example, are allotted two children, one male and one female-but the fact that all individuals have crucial life-choices made for them (in particular, choice of career) is the most important.

Individual vs. Society

Superficially, the community is easy going about some of its rules and does allow individuals a degree of free choice. Most children do not wait till nine before they ride a bicycle. They borrow bikes from other children. Jonas's parents are allowed to bend the rules in order to take a third child into the house. But these are small matters compared with the fundamental loss of individual freedom represented by the announcement of Assignments. And in other small matters there are highly ritualized and formulaic expectations of behavior which support the will of the whole group as opposed to the individual. A child late for school makes an apology, and there is an immediate group response, "We accept your apology."

At anyone moment individuals must be prepared to respond to announcements made through the ubiquitous loudspeakers. A day's holiday is proclaimed and everyone takes a rest from work. There is no opportunity for planning an individual vacation. There is nowhere to go; not much else to do. The community can only be successful in curtailing individual freedom by severely limiting the choices available to individuals. Hence, the community is paranoid in its insularity. Hence, the panic at the beginning of the novel, when an unidentified plane flies overhead.

The only character allowed any degree of personal freedom is The Giver. The power of his individuality is symbolized by the casual way in which he feels free to switch off the loudspeaker so that he cannot hear public announcements. This greatly impresses Jonas.

Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person ("he/she"), but the narrative point of view is that of the main character, Jonas. From the first to final paragraph of the novel, the reader is always inside the head of Jonas, feeling with him the anxious moments leading up to the announcement of his Assignment, and feeling with him both the pleasurable and the painful memories passed on by The Giver.

Structure

The novel's structure is uncomplicated. The story is told in twenty-three, relatively short chapters, which describe a chronological narrative. The book is not divided into parts, but if it were there would be three

Chapters 1 through 8 describe the events leading up to Jonas's selection as the next Receiver of Memories. These first eight chapters establish Jonas as a quiet boy who indulges in a fair amount of self-reflection. He is an easy character for the reader to identify with. The early chapters also establish the key attributes of the community and its social order. The piecemeal delivery of this information is important, because it allows the reader to begin reading the novel willing to give the community the benefit of the doubt, and therefore to share in Jonas's sense of disillusion when he later discovers some harsh truths. The time-scale of this section is quite condensed. The ceremony takes place in December, and Chapter 1 begins with the words "It was almost December."

Chapters 9 through 20 describe Jonas's apprenticeship to The Giver. The passing-on of memories amounts to an education of the sensibilities. It is not an education which others in the community have enjoyed, and this means that Jonas's "childhood, his friendships, his carefree sense of security-all of these things seemed to be slipping away." Gradually he realizes just what the community has sacrificed in order to enjoy the placid, well-ordered way of life it has chosen for itself. This realization takes place over a number of visits to The Giver, culminating in an overnight stay in Chapter 20, following Jonas's discovery of what goes on in the Releasing Room. The time-scale of these chapters is looser than the earlier part of the book. In Chapter 16 we are told that almost a year, has passed since Jonas became twelve.

Chapters 21 through 23 cover Jonas's flight from the community. Especially as exhaustion sets in, the narrative in these final chapters of the book becomes more impressionistic and less explicitly descriptive, so that the reader is unsure how far Jonas has travelled. The two fugitives' final sled ride is described in such a way as to leave the ending of the book open, so that different readers can interpret it in their own way. It is

almost as if Lowry wants to allow the reader freedom of choice at this crucial point in her story, in order to emphasize one of the key themes of the novel.

Allegory

There are not many highly-accomplished allegorical novels written for children. *The Giver* is one. Clearly the community in the novel is representative of all groups that try and close themselves off from the influences of the wider world. In particular it shares many of the social attributes found amongst Anabaptist or Amish communities: emphases on codes of dress, rites of passage, the subservience of the individual to the will of the group. But it would be wrong to read the novel simply as a critique of such communities. There is, for example, a more general allegorical message in the expectations of a pedagogy that expects all children to accomplish the same goals at the same age. And there is an even stronger allegorical message for any society contemplating euthanasia as a means of reducing the burden of caring for the old and infirm.

The novel is also an allegory about systems of arcane knowledge, and as such appears to be critical of Gnosticism (the idea that the deeper truths about our world are best reserved for a few, chosen minds-passed on to the few, but kept from the many). The relationship between The Giver and Jonas is redolent of that between sage and disciple.

Resolution

The exact fate of Jonas and Gabriel might be uncertain at the end of the book (although Lowry's choice of name for the baby boy would seem to load the argument in favor of an optimistic interpretation). Is the vision of lights at the bottom of the hill and the sound of voices singing a true apprehension, or a sign that Jonas is sinking into unconsciousness? In a sense, it does not matter how the reader decides to interpret the final paragraphs, the real resolution of the novel having occurred in Chapter 20, when the decision to escape was made, with all the consequences that this will have for the community. The memories of how life used to be, kept for safekeeping (quite why is never satisfactorily explained) by The Giver, will be released with Jonas's going amongst the community. Life there will never be the same again. That nasty world has been undone.

Historical Context

Bosnia

Lowry's novel was written against the backdrop of events in Bosnia, and in particular the ugly results of "ethnic cleansing." During the early 1990s, Serbian forces in Bosnia opened concentration camps and attempted to rid the country of Muslims. Muslim women were raped and Muslim men incarcerated and starved, all as a matter of social and political policy. These practices were made known to the world by investigative journalism. The community in Lowry's novel is similarly concerned to keep outsiders at bay. There is only a way out of the community, no way in.

Euthanasia

While writing her novel, Lowry will have been aware of a celebrated euthanasia case in 1990, involving Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Kevorkian had once proposed rendering death row prison inmates unconscious so that their living bodies could be used as the subjects of medical experiments. The suggestion had led to his dismissal, but he continued his preoccupation with euthanasia by writing on the subject for European medical journals. In an issue of *Medicine and Law,* he suggested setting up suicide clinics, arguing that the acceptance of planned death required the establishment of well-staffed and well-organized medical clinics where terminally ill patients can opt for death under controlled circumstances of compassion and decorum. In the late 1980s, he developed a suicide device that was basically a method of administering a lethal injection. In the novel, the Releasing Room, and the crude means of administering Release, bear all the hallmarks of Kevorkian's suicide device.

Kevorkian appeared on the Donahue talk show in April, 1990. A woman who had been diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's disease saw the show and got into contact with him. An English professor, she found the prospect of deteriorating mental faculties impossible to bear. Both she and her husband had been long-standing members of the Hemlock Society, which supports doctor-assisted suicide. On June 4, 1990, using Kevorkian's suicide machine, she terminated her own life.

Although attempts to punish Kevorkian with the law on this and subsequent occasions failed, the moral outcry was vociferous. Condoning suicide paves the way for society to abdicate its responsibility for improving conditions for the elderly and chronically ill, many argued. However, the woman's family and friends insisted that she was competent to make her decision and had every right to do so. They defended the doctor's part in her death. This particular case, and others Kevorkian has been associated with since then, have dramatized the issue of the right to die in a way that has demanded full media attention. Lowry's children's novel might well be advocated reading for any adult anxious to consider the full implications of doctor-assisted suicide.

Branch Davidian Raid

Early in 1993 the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, was raided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), after neighbors of the religious group complained of hearing machine-gun fire and a United Parcel Service employee reported delivering two cases of hand grenades and black gunpowder. The Branch Davidians were an offshoot of the Davidian Seventh-Day Adventists, a splinter group of the Seventh-Day Adventists.

David Koresh had joined the group in 1984 and immediately began a campaign to gain control. Under Koresh, the religious sect became a full-fledged cult. He incorporated a strict regime for the group, but excluded himself from his own discipline. After the first abortive raid by the ATF, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) swarmed the compound, hoping that cult members would surrender themselves voluntarily. Weeks of negotiations followed before the FBI asked Attorney General Janet Reno to authorize another raid on the compound.

The raid commenced at 12:05 p.m. Smoke was seen coming from the compound. Fire trucks were called, but they did not arrive for thirty minutes. By that time, most of the building had already collapsed. Eighty-six people perished in the fire, including seventeen children and Koresh himself. Only nine people survived.

Koresh was representative of individuals who cast a mesmerizing spell and gain supreme control of a sect. The community in Lowry's novel is a much more substantial body of people than this, and should not be referred to as a cult (Lowry herself does not use this word in the novel) any more than the Anabaptists Or the Amish are cults. In this regard, although the events of the Branch Davidian Raid were closely contemporary with the book's publication, they are not particularly relevant to the themes of the novel.

Critical Overview

Despite its differences from Lowry's other work, *The Giver* was universally well-received on publication. Gary D. Schmidt, writing in *The Five Owl$,* stated: "This is a fantasy novel that does what fantasy at its best can do: make us see the reality all the more clearly. The questions it asks about the costs of love, the structure of the family, the role of painful memories, the nature of the perfect society are all timely." In a much longer, but equally enthusiastic review of "this intricately constructed masterwork," Patty Campbell, writing for *Horn Book,* began by drawing attention to the departure from Lowry's usual style. "Up until now, much of Lowry's work has consisted of [what one reviewer called] 'contemporary novels with engaging characters that explore something very rare-a functional family.' But *The Giver* is a dystopia, 'driven by plot and philosophy-not by character and dialogue,' and the picture of the functional family turns disturbingly awry as the story proceeds." Campbell takes advantage of the space allowed for an extended review to delineate what she sees as the exceptional advance in narrative skill shown in the novel. The opening of the novel, she argues, shows a mastery of "innuendo, foreshadowing, and resonance." Quoting the opening sentence, Campbell goes on to explain: "The word December is loaded with resonance: the darkness of the solstice, endings, Christmas, cold. The name Jonas, too,

is evocative-of the biblical Jonah, he who is sent by God to cry against the wickedness of Nineveh, an unwilling lone messenger with a mission that will be received with hostility. In one seemingly simple sentence Lowry sets the mood and direction of her story, foreshadows its outcome, and plants an irresistible narrative pull."

Proceeding to compare the novel with Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale,* Campbell then analyzed the skill with which Lowry slowly reveals the unpleasant edifice upon which the initially appealing community is based, before admiring the ingenuity of the novelist's handling of the denouement. Amongst a minority of reviews to question certain aspects of the novel, Jane Inglis, writing in *School Librarian,* wondered whether able readers might be frustrated "by the strict limits imposed by the author on her creative imagination." Inglis went on to recommend Lowry's book as "an admirable early venture into fictional dystopias, with lots of follow-up material available for the reader who craves for more." However, the review was out of kilter with the judgement of Campbell and others that Lowry's novel, though a children's book, deserved to be considered alongside the very best books written on a similar theme.

Lowry's Newbery acceptance speech identified the creative source of the book as memories bubbling up like springs and mountain streams, "each tributary bringing with it the collected bits and pieces from the past, from the distant, from the countless Elsewhere: all of it moving, mingled, in the current." She remembered living in an American enclave, situated in the centre of Tokyo, cocooned from the Japanese way of life. She remembered the way in which, at college, a fellow student had been ostracized simply for being different. There had been no teasing or unpleasantness. "We do something worse: we ignore her. We pretend that she doesn't exist. In a small house of fourteen young women, we make one invisible." She remembered meeting a painter,

Carl Nelson, who later became blind. "I wonder what it was like for him to lose the colors about which he was so impassioned." In summarizing what these and other memories represented, Lowry has been her own most revealing critic. "I've never been a writer of fairy tales. And if I've learned anything through that river of memories, it is that we can't live in a walled world, in an 'only us, only now' world, where we are all the same and feel safe. We would have to sacrifice too much. The richness of color would disappear. Feelings for other human beings would no longer be necessary. Choice would be obsolete."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Elyse Lord is *a visiting instructor at the University of Utah and at the Salt Lake City Community College. In the following essay, she evaluates controversial themes in* The Giver *and concludes that Lowry's novel, while terrifying in many ways, offers its readers hope and a constructive view of Jonas's world.*

Critics respond to Lois Lowry's novel, *The Giver,* with nearly universal praise. The book has received more than ten prestigious awards, including the highly coveted Newbery Medal, which the American Library Association awarded it in 1994. (The ALA awards the Newbery Medal to the best book published in the United States for children or young adults in the preceding year.)

One reason for the novel's nearly unprecedented acclaim is that its storyline captures the interest of a wide group of readers and critics. For example, many scholars consider the novel to be dystopian (about a miserable society), and compare it favorably to adult classics like *Brave New World* (1933), *Fahrenheit* 451 (1953), and 1984 (1940) as well as to children's classics like *White Mountains* (1967) and *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962). Other scholars, like Patty Campbell, praise the novel for capturing the moral imaginations of its readers. Campbell lauds the novel for taking "hardened young-adult reviewers by surprise." The novel, she says, is so "rich in levels of meaning, so daring in complexity of symbol and metaphor, so challenging in the ambiguity of its conclusion, that we are left with all of our neat little everyday categories and judgments hanging useless."

While critics', librarians', educators', and students' responses to the novel seem like veritable fanfare, the novel has nevertheless become the center of a spirited censorship debate. To the surprise and indignation of many of the novels' enthusiasts, *The Giver,* according to a report by the People for the American Way, was the second most frequently challenged book in 1996. Parents in cities as geographically dispersed as Las Vegas, Nevada, Columbia Falls, Montana, Palm Springs, California, and Brecksville, Ohio, have protested use of the novel in public schools because it contains adult themes like infanticide (baby killing) and euthanasia (mercy deaths). In one particularly controversial scene, Jonas, the protagonist in the novel, watches as his father carefully directs a needle "into the top of new-child' s forehead, puncturing the place where the fragile skin pulsed." His father says cheerfully, "I know, I know. it hurts, little guy. But I have to use a vein, and the veins in your arms are still too teeny-weeny." Jonas's father pushes in the plunger, then says, "All done," and sends the small corpse down a trash chute. Would-be censors object to the scene because it is so graphic, and because it transforms Jonas's once beloved father into a cold-blooded murderer.

The irony of censorship attacks on the novel is that *The Giver* dramatizes the plight of an individual living in a society that censors its peoples' language, emotions, and behaviors. This irony is compounded by the fact that most who would like to see *The Giver* censored confess that they have never read the novel in its entirety. However, would-be censors raise important questions, not just about Lowry's novel, but about all

novels for youth. For example, parent Anna Cerbasi of Port Saint Lucie, Florida, who asked school board members to remove the novel from middle-school shelves, objected to the book because "Nobody is a family. They kill the baby who cries at night. I read it and thought-no way. Not for sixth grade. Maybe high school, maybe." Ms. Cerbasi's concerns about the novel raise legitimate questions about who should decide which books are appropriate for which children, and whether or not disturbing stories are appropriate for youth even if they teach a valuable lesson.

However, these large questions cannot be answered on the basis of one book. In fact, a surprising number of books written for youth contain graphic and disturbing materials. It seems likely that Lowry's novel has been more controversial than most, not because it is any more "dangerous" than other books, but because it has been so widely integrated into school curricula and has therefore caught more parents' attention than less accessible books. Given the size of the question-how can one evaluate whether or not terrifying materials are appropriate for a youthful reader-it is most realistic to respond to would-be censors' concerns by presenting a constructive reading of *The Giver,* a reading which is consistent with educators' efforts to discuss controversial scenes in sensitive and responsible ways.

Critics and censors all agree that Jonas's situation in *The Giver* is horrifying. Through a series of shocking events, he discovers that "release" is actually murder, that his people literally have limited vision (they can only see in black and white, so do not notice racial differences, or colors of any kind), and that his people have no way to think for themselves, or to make decisions without the Giver's help. (They have no memories of pain and pleasure, and they are sedated so as not to feel the "stirrings" of their own desire.) Jonas is understandably concerned by these discoveries, especially when he learns that his step-brother Gabriel is going to be "released" (killed) because he cries during the night. Jonas knows that he must save Gabriel, and he knows that he must do something to help his community to respond more creatively to the inevitable (and sometimes painful) variation of the human species.

Jonas's despair is, at this point, so profound that readers may fear he will be overcome by it. However, he does overcome his despair, and this is why the book is so important-and appropriate for young people to read. Lowry has equipped Jonas with the qualities he will need to rise above his difficult Circumstances. She has given him the ability to see color, the ability to grapple with imperceptible ideas (like memories and colors), and faith in his own ability to act morally. She has made Jonas's perceptual abilities a condition for him to act heroically in this story. Through Jonas, Lowry argues for the preservation of a kind of creative vision, a vision which every community needs if it is to benefit from its citizens' differences and input.

More specifically, Jonas is a hero worth emulating because, throughout the novel, he develops and refines his unusual ability to perceive and to understand ideas that are outside of his frame of reference. One day, for example, Jonas notices a "change" in an apple. When he tries to define this change, by observing the apple under a magnifying glass, he fails. The magnifying glass doesn't help him because what Jonas needs is "a new way of looking" at things in order to apprehend color, a magnifying glass does not

allow him to apprehend what is new and different. Here Lowry is suggesting that the vision of an artistic boy, who is open to ideas that exist outside of current paradigms of thought, is of the utmost importance to a society that has lost the ability to perceive differences. Similarly, when Jonas admits to the community that he believes he has the capacity to "see beyond," the crowd begins to collectively murmur his name. Ironically, the community, which, as The Giver points out, has "never completely mastered Sameness," selects Jonas to help lead them *because* of his ability to perceive differences. Jonas's vision is all the more valuable because it is in such short supply. Lowry is arguing for the preservation of a particular way of looking at the world that is essential to the survival of the human(e) race.

Further evidence of the importance of Jonas's unique perceptual abilities comes when he discovers that his community's goodness is a sham. Had Jonas simply rejected his community (as a "lesser" character might have done), the novel would not have carried the same positive psychological impact. Jonas *does* initially feel contempt for his community, but he quickly develops the insights he needs to channel his anger into constructive actions. For example, he sarcastically mimics his peoples' obedience.

I will take care of that, sir. I will take care of that, sir. I will do whatever you like, sir. I will kill people, sir. Old people? Small newborn people? I'd be happy to kill them, sir. Thank you for your instructions, sir.

But the Giver tells Jonas that "They can't help it They know nothing." Jonas struggles to understand his community, and comes to recognize that it is made up of learned, civilized people, who have no awareness of their origins and very little knowledge of how rules are made. Jonas's people cannot perceive differences; they do not adapt well to change. And so they are simple, shallow, and murderous.

Yes, Lowry's novel is terrifying, but it is not irresponsible in its handling of sensitive materials.

In fact, Lowry seems to be dramatizing a modern view of healing, as described by Louise Kaplan in her book *No Voice* is *Ever Wholly Lost.* After working with holocaust victims and their families, Kaplan concluded that, even though many holocaust survivors have never verbally shared their experiences with their children, their children feel compelled to physically reenact their parents' trauma (by developing anorexia, for example). The bodies and subconscious minds of holocaust survivors' children understand-without words-the name of their parents' unwitnessable suffering. The only release for these children is to hear their parents' stories. This "truth telling" frees children from the compulsions they feel to "enact and concretize" their parents' unspeakable and painful pasts.

Kaplan's observations of how parents unknowingly transmit traumas to their children support a reading of Lowry's novel as powerful and positive. Jonas has been selected to receive memories because his community members prefer the comfort of virtually pain-free and comfortable living. However, Jonas discovers that if he leaves-or dies-his memories will be released and transmitted back to the community. Jonas chooses to

give the community back its memories. If Kaplan's theory is right (and according to the logic of Lowry's story), the community needs its memories in order to heal itself; if members acknowledge both their pain and their joy, as well as the depths of their emotions, Jonas will be "released" (not killed) from the huge burden of serving as the Keeper of Memory Lowry's ending, though ambiguous, lends support to the idea that the novel embraces "wholeness" as a healing principle. In the end, Jonas, who has run away from home with Gabriel in tow, discovers a place that he remembers. He finds a sled that he remembers, mounts it, and its runners slice through the snow and take him towards "Elsewhere," the place that holds his and Gabriel's "future and ... past." Jonas then hears music for the first time. He is able to hear the music, to recognize the music, because he has relinquished others' memories, and in so doing has opened the door to his own perceptions. It is now possible for his new thoughts and feelings to join with his old thoughts and feelings. Lowry foreshadows this perplexing but hopeful ending when she describes Jonas as Keeper of the "memories of the whole world." Her message, finally, is that one cannot ignore uncomfortable memories; one must embrace a "whole" vision, which contains joy as well as pain, if one (or one's children) is/are ever to feel "at home" in the world.

Though Lowry has consistently declined to interpret *The Giver's* ending, she has revealed that she is pleased by young readers who have perceived "the magic of the circular journey," and "the truth that we go out and come back, and that what we come back to is changed, and so are we."

Lowry's novel is compelling, terrifying, and above all, hopeful. Through reading about Jonas, a boy who has the courage and vision to help his people to acknowledge their pain and differences, Lowry's readers can experience the joy of pushing "open the gate" [Lowry's metaphor] that separates them from elsewhere. It would be hard to find a more appropriate message for youth, who are immersed in making important decisions about what kinds of people they will one day become.

Source: Elyse Lord, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

Lois Lowry explains the origins of The Giver *in this excerpt, taken from her* 1993 *Newbery Medal acceptance speech, given at the annual meeting of the American Library Association on June* 26, 1994, *in Miami, Florida.*

"How do you know where to start?" a child asked me once, in a schoolroom where I'd been speaking to her class about the writing of books. I shrugged and smiled and told her that I just start wherever it feels right.

This evening it feels right to start by quoting a passage from *The Giver* a scene set during the days in which the boy, Jonas, is beginning to look more deeply into the life that has been very superficial, beginning to see that his own past goes back further than he had ever known and has greater implications than he had ever suspected.

Now he saw the familiar wide river beside the path differently He saw all of the light and color and history it contained and carried in its slow-moving water, and he knew that there was an Elsewhere from which it came, and an Elsewhere to which it was going

Every author is asked again and again the question we probably each have come to dread the most: How did you get this idea?

We give glib, quick answers because there are other hands raised, other kids in the audience waiting.

I'd like, tonight, to dispense with my usual flippancy and glibness and try to tell you the origins of this book. It is a little like Jonas looking into the river and realizing that it carries with it everything that has come from an Elsewhere. A spring, perhaps, at the beginning, bubbling up from the earth; then a trickle from a glacier; a mountain stream entering farther along; and each tributary bringing with it the collected bits and pieces from the past, from the distant, from the countless Elsewheres: all of it moving, mingled, in the current.

For me, the tributaries are memories, and I've selected only a few. I'll tell them to you chronologically. I have to go way back. I'm starting forty-six years ago.

In 1948 I am eleven years old. I have gone with my mother, sister, and brother to join my father, who has been in Tokyo for two years and will be there for several more.

We live there, in the center of that huge Japanese city, in a small American enclave with a very American name: Washington Heights We live in an American-style house, with American neighbors, and our little community has its own movie theater, which shows American movies, and a small church, a tiny library, and an elementary school; and in many ways it is an odd replica of a United States village.

(In later, adult years I was to ask my mother why we had lived there instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to live within the Japanese community and to learn and experience a different way of life. But she seemed surprised by my question.

She said that we lived where we did because it was comfortable. It was familiar. It was safe.)

At eleven years old I am not a particularly adventurous child, nor am I a rebellious one. But I have always been *curious.*

I have a bicycle. Again and again---countless times-without my parents' knowledge, I ride my bicycle out the back gate of the fence that surrounds our comfortable, familiar, safe American community. I ride down a hill because I am curious, and I enter, riding down that hill, an unfamiliar, slightly uncomfortable, perhaps even unsafe-though I never feel it to be-area of Tokyo that throbs with life.

It is a district called Shibuya. It is crowded with shops and people and theaters and street vendors and the day-to-day bustle of Japanese life.

I remember, still, after all these years, the smells: fish and fertilizer and charcoal; the sounds: music and shouting and the clatter of wooden shoes and wooden sticks and wooden wheels; and the colors: I remember the babies and toddlers dressed in bright pink and orange and red, most of all; but I remember, too, the dark blue uniforms of the schoolchildren-the strangers who are my own age.

I wander through Shibuya day after day during those years when I am eleven, twelve, and thirteen. I love the feel of it, the vigor and the garish brightness and the noise: all such a contrast to my own life.

But I never talk to anyone. I am not frightened of the people, who are so different from me, but I am shy. I watch the children shouting and playing around a school, and they are children my age, and they watch me in return; but we never speak to one another.

One afternoon I am standing on a street corner when a woman near me reaches out, touches my hair, and says something. I back away, startled, because my knowledge of the language is poor and I misunderstand her words. I think she has said *"kirai-desu,* " meaning that she dislikes me; and I am embarrassed, and confused, wondering what I have done wrong: how I have disgraced myself.

Then, after a moment, I realize my mistake. She has said, actually, *"kirei-desu."* She has called me pretty. And r look for her, in the crowd, at least to smile, perhaps to say thank you if I can overcome my shyness enough to speak. But she is gone.

I remember this moment-this instant of communication gone awry-again and again over the years. Perhaps this is where the river starts.

In 1954 and 1955 I am a college freshman, living in a very small dormitory, actually a converted private home, with a group of perhaps fourteen other girls. We are very much

alike. We wear the same sort of clothes: cashmere sweaters and plaid wool skirts, knee socks and loafers. We all smoke Marlboro cigarettes, and we knit-usually argyle socks for our boyfriends-and play bridge. Sometimes we study; and we get good grades because we are all the cream of the crop, the valedictorians and class presidents from our high schools all over the United States.

One of the girls in our dorm is not like the rest of us. She doesn't wear our uniform. She wears blue jeans instead of skirts, and she doesn't curl her hair or knit or play bridge. She doesn't date or go to fraternity parties and dances.

She's a smart girl, a good student, a pleasant enough person, but she is different, somehow alien, and that makes us uncomfortable. We react with a kind of mindless cruelty. We don't tease or torment her, but we do something worse: we ignore her. We pretend that she doesn't exist. In a small house of fourteen young women, we make one invisible.

Somehow, by shutting her out, we make ourselves feel comfortable. Familiar. Safe. I think of her now and then as the years pass. Those thoughts-fleeting, but profoundly remorseful-enter the current of the river.

In the summer of 1979, I am sent by a magazine I am working for to an Island off the coast of Maine to write an article about a painter who lives there alone. I spend a good deal of time with this man, and we talk a lot about color. It is clear to me that although r am a highly visual person-a person who sees and appreciates form and composition and color-this man's capacity for seeing color goes far beyond mine.

I photograph him while I am there, and I keep a copy of his photograph for myself because there is something about his face-his eyes-which haunts me.

Later I hear that he has become blind.

I think about him-his name is Carl Nelson from time to time. His photograph hangs over my desk. I wonder what it was like for him to lose the colors about which he was so impassioned. I wish, in a whimsical way, that he could have somehow magically given me the capacity to see the way he did.

A little bubble begins, a little spurt, which will trickle into the river.

In 1989 I go to a small village in Germany to attend the wedding of one of my sons. In an ancient church, he marries his Margaret in a ceremony conducted in a language I do not speak and cannot understand.

But one section of the service is in English. A woman stands in the balcony of that old stone church and sings the words from the Bible: *Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people.*

How small the world has become, I think, looking around the church at the many people who sit there wishing happiness to my son and his new wife, wishing it in their own

language as I am wishing it in mine. *We are all each other's people now,* I find myself thinking.

Can you feel that this memory is a stream that is now entering the river?

Another fragment. My father, nearing ninety, is in a nursing home. My brother and I have hung family pictures on the walls of his room. During a visit, he and I are talking about the people in the pictures. One is my sister, my parents' first child, who died young of cancer. My father smiles, looking at her picture. "That's your sister," he says happily. "That's Helen"

Then he comments, a little puzzled, but not at all sad, "I can't remember exactly what happened to her."

We can forget pain, I thought. And it is comfortable to do so.

But I also wonder briefly: is it safe to do that, to forget?

That uncertainty pours itself into the river of thought which will become the book.

1991. I am in an auditorium somewhere. I have spoken at length about my book *Number the Stars,* which has been honored with the 1990 Newbery Medal A woman raises her hand. When the time for her question comes, she sighs very loudly, and says, "Why do we have to tell this Holocaust thing over and over? Is it really *necessary?"*

I answer her as well as I can, quoting, in fact, my German daughter-in-law, who has said to me, "No one knows better than we Germans that we must tell this again and again."

But I think about her question-and my answer-a great deal.

Wouldn't it, I think, playing devil's advocate to myself, make for a more comfortable world to *forget* the Holocaust? And I remember once again how comfortable, familiar, and safe my parents had sought to make my childhood by Shielding me from Elsewhere. But I remember, too, that my response had been to open the gate again and again. My instinct had been a child's attempt to see for myself what lay beyond the wall.

The thinking becomes another tributary into the river of thought that will create *The Giver.*

Here's another memory. I am sitting in a booth with my daughter in a little Beacon Hill pub where she and I often have lunch together. The television is on in the background, behind the bar, as it always is. She and I are talking. Suddenly I gesture to her. I say, "Shhh," because I have heard a fragment of the news and I am startled, anxious, and want to hear the rest.

Someone has walked into a fast-food place with an automatic weapon and randomly killed a number of people. My daughter stops talking and waits while I listen to the rest.

Then I relax. I say to her, in a relieved voice, "It's all right. It was in Oklahoma." (Or perhaps it was Alabama. Or Indiana.)

She stares at me in amazement that I have said such a hideous thing.

How comfortable I made myself feel for a moment, by reducing my own realm of caring to my own familiar neighborhood. How safe I deluded myself into feeling.

I think about that, and it becomes a torrent that enters the flow of a river turbulent by now, and clogged with memories and thoughts and ideas that begin to mesh and intertwine. The river begins to seek a place to spill over.

When Jonas meets The Giver for the first time, and tries to comprehend what lies before him, he says, in confusion, "I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now."

In beginning to write *The Giver* I created, as I always do, in every book, a world that existed only in my imagination-the world of "only us, only now." I tried to make Jonas's world seem familiar, comfortable, and safe, and I tried to seduce the reader. I seduced myself along the way. It did feel good, that world. I got rid of all the things I fear and dislike: all the violence, prejudice, poverty, and injustice; and I even threw in good manners as a way of life because I liked the idea of it.

One child has pointed out, in a letter, that the people in Jonas's world didn't even have to do dishes.

It was very, very tempting to leave it at that.

But I've never been a writer of fairy tales. And if I've learned anything through that river of memories, It is that we can't live in a walled world, in an "only us, only now" world, where we are all the same and feel safe. We would have to sacrifice too much. The richness of color would disappear. Feelings for other humans would no longer be necessary. Choice would be obsolete.

And besides, I had ridden my bike Elsewhere as a child, and liked It there, but had never been brave enough to tell anyone about it. So it was time.

A letter that I've kept for a very long time is from a child who has read my book *Anastasia Krupnik.* Her letter-she's a little girl named Paula from Louisville, Kentucky-says:

"I really like the book you wrote about Anastasia and her family because it made me laugh every time I read it. I especially liked when it said she didn't want to have a baby brother in the house because she had to clean up after him every time and change !us diaper when her mother and father aren't home and she doesn't like to give him a bath and watch him all the time and put him to sleep every night while her mother goes to work... "

Here's the fascinating thing: *Nothing that the child describes actually happens in the book.* The child-as we all do-has brought her own life to a book She has found a place, a place in the pages of a book, that shares her own frustrations and feelings.

And the same thing is happening-as I hoped it would happen-with *The Giver.*

Those of you who hoped that I would stand here tonight and reveal the "true" ending, the "right" interpretation of the ending, will be disappointed. There isn't one. There's a right one for each of us, and it depends on our own beliefs, our own hopes.

Let me tell you a few endings which are the right endings for a few children out of the many who have written to me.

From a sixth grader. "I think that when they were traveling they were traveling in a circle. When they came to 'Elsewhere' it was their old community, but they had accepted the memories and all the feelings that go along with it."

From another: "Jonas was kind of like Jesus because he took the pain for everyone else in the community so they wouldn't have to suffer. And, at the very end of the book, when Jonas and Gabe reached the place that they knew as Elsewhere, you described Elsewhere as if it were Heaven."

And one more: "A lot of people I know would hate that ending, but not me. I loved it. Mainly because I got to make the book happy. I decided they made it. They made it to the past. I decided the past was our world, and the future was their world. It was parallel worlds."

Finally, from one seventh-grade boy: "I was really surprised that they Just died at the end. That was a bummer. You could of made them stay alive, I thought."

Very few find it a bummer. Most of the young readers who have written to me have perceived the magic of the circular journey. The truth that we go out and come back, and that what we come back to is changed, and so are we. Perhaps I have been traveling in a circle, too. Things come together and become complete.

Here is what I've come back to:

The daughter who was with me and looked at me in horror the day I fell victim to thinking we were "only us, only now" (and that what happened in Oklahoma, or Alabama, or Indiana didn't matter) was the first person to read the manuscript of *The Giver.*

The college classmate who was "different" lives, last I heard, very happily in New Jersey with another woman who shares her life. I can only hope that she has forgiven those of us who were young in a more frightened and less enlightened time.

My son, and Margret, his German wife-the one who reminded me how important it is to tell our stories again and again, painful though they often are-now have a little girl who

will be the receiver of all of their memories. Their daughter had crossed the Atlantic three times before she was six months old. Presumably my granddaughter will never be fearful of Elsewhere.

Carl Nelson, the man who lost colors but not the memory of them, is the face on the cover of the book He died in 1989 but left a vibrant legacy of paintings. One hangs now in my home.

And I am especially happy to stand here tonight on this platform with Allen Say because it truly brings my Journey full circle. Allen was twelve years old when I was. He lived in Shibuya, that alien Elsewhere that I went to as a child on a bicycle. He was one of the Other, the Different, the dark-eyed children in blue school uniforms, and I was too timid then to do more than stand at the edge of their schoolyard, smile shyly, and wonder what their lives were like.

Now I can say to Allen what I wish I could have said then: *Watashi-no tomodachi desu.* Greetings, my friend.

I have been asked whether the Newbery Medal is, actually, an odd sort of burden in terms of the greater responsibility one feels. Whether one is paralyzed by it, fearful of being able to live up to the standards it represents.

For me the opposite has been true. I think the 1990 Newbery freed me to risk failure.

Other people took that risk with me, of course. One was my editor, Walter Lorraine, who has never to my knowledge been afraid to take a chance Walter cares more about what a book has to say than he does about whether he can turn it into a stuffed animal or a calendar or a movie.

The Newbery Committee was gutsy, too. There would have been safer books. More comfortable books. More familiar books. They took a trip beyond the realm of sameness, with this one, and I think they should be very proud of that.

And all of you, as well. Let me say something to those of you here who do such dangerous work.

The man that I named The Giver passed along to the boy knowledge, history, memories, color, pain, laughter, love, and truth. Every time you place a book in the hands of a child, you do the same thing.

It is very risky.

But each time a child opens a book, he pushes open the gate that separates him from Elsewhere. It gives him choices. It gives him freedom.

Those are magnificent, wonderfully *unsafe* things.

I have been greatly honored by you now, two times. It is Impossible to express my gratitude for that. Perhaps the only way, really, is to return to Boston, to my office, to my desk, and to go back to work in hopes that whatever I do next will justify the faith in me that this medal represents.

There are other rivers flowing.

Source: Lois Lowry, "Newbery Medal Acceptance," In *The Horn Book Magazine,* Vol. LXX, No.4, July-August, 1994, pp. 414-22.

Critical Essay #3

In this excerpt, Patty Campbell, noted author, critic, and general editor of Twayne's Young Adult Author series, discusses the unexpected elements in Lowry's The Giver, *with its multilevels of meaning, complex symbolism, and ambiguous conclusion, so radical a change from previous works by the author.*

Once in a long while a book comes along that takes hardened young-adult reviewers by surprise, a book so unlike what has gone before, so rich in levels of meaning, so daring in complexity of symbol and metaphor, so challenging in the ambiguity of its conclusion, that we are left with all our neat little everyday categories and judgments hanging useless. Books like Robert Cormier's *I Am the Cheese* or Terry Davis's *Mysterious Ways* are examples of these rare treasures But after the smoke of our personal enthusiasm has cleared, we are left with uneasy thoughts: Will young adults understand it? Will the intricate subtleties that so delight us as adult critics go right over their heads? Will the questions posed by the ending leave them puzzled and annoyed, rather than thoughtful and intrigued? It all depends-on the maturity of the particular young adult, on how well we introduce the book and follow up with discussion, and on certain qualities in the book itself. In the past year young-adult literature has been blessed with two such extraordinary works. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *You Must Kiss a Whale* by David Skinner.

The Giver is particularly surprising because it is a major departure from the style and type of book we have come to expect from Lois Lowry, as *Horn Book* Editor Anita Silvey pointed out in her July/August 1993 editorial. Up until now, much of Lowry's work has consisted of "contemporary novels with engaging characters that explore something very rare-a functional family." But *The Giver* is a dystopia, "driven by plot and philosophy-not by character and dialogue," and the picture of the functional family turns disturbingly awry as the story proceeds. Indeed, it is Lowry's skill at depicting cheerful, ordinary reality that makes the revelation of the sinister difference in this alternate reality so chilling.

Most surprising of all is the leap forward Lowry has made in mastering the creation of a subtext by innuendo, foreshadowing, and resonance.

Take, for example, the opening sentence. "It was almost December, and Jonas was beginning to be frightened." The word *December* is loaded with resonance: the darkness of the solstice, endings, Christmas, cold. *Almost* and *beginning* pull forward to the future source of his fear, "that deep, sickening feeling of something terrible about to happen." The name Jonas, too, is evocative-of the biblical Jonah, he who is sent by God to cry against the wickedness of Nineveh, an unwilling lone messenger with a mission that will be received with hostility. In one seemingly simple sentence Lowry sets the mood and direction of her story, foreshadows its outcome, and plants an irresistible narrative pull.

The fascinating gradual revelation of a world and its interlocking rationale as explained by a protagonist immersed in the culture is reminiscent of Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale.* Lowry plays with our perceptions and our emotions, creating tension by presenting details of this community that win our approval, and then hinting at something terribly wrong. The family, for instance, seems ideal: a gentle, caring father and mother and the one child of each gender that tells us that this community has solved the population problem; the scenes of their warm, bantering conversations around the dinner table; their formal sharing (as required by the Rules) of feelings from their day and dreams from their night; the comfort and support they offer one another. But then we hear of Birthmothers and applications for children and spouses; we begin to wonder why there are no grandparents and to suspect what lies behind the parents' talk of "release."

Lowry has structured the intriguing details of this planned community with meticulous care, focusing particularly, through Jonas's eyes, on the education system that produces a society which functions by internalized values. At first it seems to be an autocratic state-an impression that is given credence by Orwellian images such as the rasping voices that chastise from ubiquitous speakers. But soon it is revealed that the community is ruled by an elected Committee of Elders and that the citizens long ago chose this controlled life. Each peer group of fifty children is called by their ages-Fives, Elevenses-and is distinguished by certain clothes, haircuts, and required behaviors that are appropriate for their stage of development. At eight they begin to spend their after-school hours volunteering in the various work of the community, and at twelve they are each given an Assignment, based on the careful observation of the Committee of Elders, which will be their job for life.

When the fateful December ceremony comes, Jonas is stunned to learn that he has been appointed the new Receiver of Memory, the highest position in the community. Each day he goes to the rooms of the old Receiver of Memory, a reclusive elderly man whom he comes to call the Giver. There his innocence is gradually transformed as the old man transmits to him, often with great pain for Jonas, the memories of experiences and emotions that the people have chosen to banish from their minds so that they might sustain the illusion of social order and success. Jonas's first memory-lesson is a sled ride that teaches him the concepts of cold and snow and of "downhill"-ideas that are new to him because the community has abolished weather and irregular terrain in the interests of efficiency. As the days wear on, Jonas experiences war and pain and love, and begins to understand how his society has given up choice and freedom for control and pre dictability.

And then one day he asks to view a videotape of a "release" that his father has that morning performed on an unwanted baby at the community nursery, and learns to his horror that the euphemism covers engineered death-for the old, for rule breakers, and for surplus or difficult infants. Watching his father sweetly wave bye-bye to the small corpse as it slides down the disposal chute, Jonas realizes with cold shock that his nurturing family is a sham, held together by trained reactions, not love, and that there is only hollowness at the heart of the society's life. He and the Giver hatch a plot to force the community to change. Jonas will flee, so that the memories he has assimilated will

return to the people, forcing them to suffer and grow. But that night Jonas's father announces that Gabriel, the difficult toddler who has been temporarily sharing their home and whom Jonas loves, will be "released" the next morning. There is no time to carry out the plot; in the night, Jonas and Gabriel bicycle away.

And now we come to the inherent difficulty of every dystopia story-how to end. Basically, there are three possibilities. The protagonist escapes as the society collapses; the protagonist escapes with the intention of returning with the seeds of change; or the protagonist escapes, but it turns out to be an illusion. Lowry opts for elements of all three. Jonas journeys for days and days and, finally, at the end of his strength, comes to a place where there is snow, and a hill, and a sled. Here the story, which up till now has been readable as an adventure tale, becomes symbolic and ambiguous as Jonas and the dying baby begin the sled ride toward the faint distant Christmas lights which are part of his memory of love. Is it a dream? Are they already dead? Or will they find a new life? Will the community they left behind reshape itself in a more human mold? Lowry refuses to provide a tidy ending. The challenge of the ambiguity is appropriate for the stature of this intricately constructed masterwork....

Source: Patty Campbell, "The Sand in the Oyster," in *The Horn Book Magazine,* Vol LXIX, No 6, November-December, 1993, pp 717-21

Adaptations

The Giver was produced in an unabridged audiotape version in 1995, published on dual cassette by Bantam Books-Audio.

Topics for Further Study

A politician holding high office, after reading *The Giver,* decides that new laws should be passed outlawing Coltish communities. These laws will also affect traditional communities, such as the Amish and the Bruderhof. As an attorney you are engaged by such communities to help defend their continuing existence prepare your defense.

After collecting as many examples of attempts to build utopia as you can find (these should include both practical attempts, and fictional representations), plot them on a world map and on a timeline to determine whether they tend to occur in clusters.

You are a television documentary producer. You have been asked to produce an outline for a 60minute program on the subject of euthanasia, or voluntary suicide. Your professional brief requires you to present a balance of opinion, but as an individual you have very definite views. In your outline, you must construct the hour-long program so that you will be able to defend it in terms of balance, but in such a way that the balance of opinion supports your own beliefs.

A dramatization of *The Giver* is to be shown on prime-time TV. Advertisers seem reluctant to sign up for the commercial breaks. As the advertising sales executive for the TV company, identify the manufacturers and service providers who might be interested in purchasing ads. Also identify creative links that could be made with the movie and their products and services.

You are a medical practitioner in the community of The Giver. You discover that the pills taken to eradicate sexual longing ("Stirrings") have serious, indeed fatal, side-effects in later life. The Elders receive your report. Write an account of the debate which follows.

You are directing a movie version of *The Giver.* Tomorrow you will be filming the Ceremony, closely following the description in Chapters 6 and 7. How will you plan the camera-shot sequence for each stage of the Ceremony?

What Do I Read Next?

Anastasia Krupnik, the first in Lowry's sequence of novels about a "crackle-brained, fizzle-headed, freckle-faced dynamo." The atmosphere in this novel could not be more different from *The Giver.* Can you identify *any* connections?

One reviewer of *The Giver* compared it with Margaret Atwood's adult novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), a dystopia in which women's roles are limited to either wIfe or bearer of children.

There were several attempts to set up utopian communities in the nineteenth century Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) is based on personal experience of one such enterprise.

Any futuristic tale must expect to be compared with George Orwell's 1949 classic, *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*

The Republic, a description of Plato's celebrated political utopia, was written in the 4th century B.C.

Further Study

Michael Betzold, *Appointment with Doctor Death,* Momentum Books, 1993.

A Journalist gathers together the evidence and background relating to cases involving Dr. Kevorkian.

Joel D. Chaston, "The Giver," in *Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults, Volume* 6, edited by Kirk H. Beetz, Beacham Publishing, Inc, 1994, pp 3255-63

Tins excerpt from a reference book surveys Lowry's life and work, suggests ideas for reports, papers, and discussions related to *The Giver,* and summarizes the novel's plot, setting, themes, characters, and literary qualities.

Joel D Chaston, *Lois Lowry,* Twayne's United States Author Series, edited by Ruth K MacDonald, Prentice Hall, Intl., 1997.

Chaston tracks Lowry's development as a writer, beginning With her childhood and her sense of story and values, and progressing through her literary career and reputation

Ilene Cooper, "Giving and Receiving," in *Booklist,* Vol. 89, April 15, 1993, P 1506.

An early review that finds the conflict between sameness and freedom in the novel to be thought provoking, but finds Lowry's message "forced," and her ending too ambiguous.

Mary Ellen Flannery, "Parents Want *The Giver* Off Shelves,"_ in *The Palm Beach Post,* June 19, 1996.

Flannery reports on the ongoing controversy between Northport Middle School and concerned parent, Anna Cerbasi, who objects to use of *The Giver* in a public school setting.

Louise Kaplan, "Images of Absence, Voices of Silence,"' in *No Voice Is Ever Wholly Lost,* Simon & Schuster, 1995, pp. 216-37.

Psychologist Kaplan discusses the difficulties, yet Importance, of bearing witness to traumatic events, and suggests that, Since Survivors of the Holocaust had to psychically absent themselves in order to survive trauma and abuse, their children must "testify as to what happened" to their parents.

Seymour R Kester, *Utopian Episodes: Dally Life in Experimental Colonies Dedicated to Changing the World,* Syracuse University Press, 1996

An extremely detailed and Critical look at the way of life endured by participants in the three principal American utopias of the nineteenth century.

Walter Lorraine, "Lois Lowry,"' in *The Horn Book Magazine,* Vol. 70, July-August, 1994, pp. 423-26.

Lowry's editor reminisces about her fiction, which he praises for being immediately accessible to "very broad" audiences.

Lois Lowry, "Calling It Quits,"' in *The Writer,* Vol. 102, April, 1989, pp. 13-14,47

Lowry discusses the Importance of ending a story in the right place, so that readers will want to continue writing the story in their own minds.

Lois Lowry, "Remembering How It Was,"' in *The Writer,* Vol. 100, July, 1987, pp. 16-19.

In this exploration of the Importance of memory to storytellers, Lowry says that, while the details in a story need not be truthful, the emotions that are connected to the details must be true. She also says that using painful memories in writing is a way to get over them.

Lois Markham, *Lois Lowry (Learning Works Meet the Author Series),* Learning Works, 1995

Published for Lowry's young readers, tins book shows how the author incorporates significant autobiographical experiences into her fiction

Donald E Pitzer, editor, *America's Communal Utopias,* University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

A collection of essays on the full range of American communities, including the Shakers, George Rapp's Harmony Society and the Oneida Perfectionists.

Karen Ray, "The Giver," in *The New York Times Book Review,* October 31, 1993, p. 26.

An early review that finds the novel's themes "provocative,"' despite the novel's "occasional logical lapses "

Michael Sadowski, "Lois Lowry and Allen Say Take Newbery, Caldecott Medals,"' in *School Library Journal,* Vol 40, No.3, March 1994, p. 123.

An early announcement that Lowry had won her second Newbery medal.

Scott Shane, *Dismantling Utopia How Information Ended the Soviet Union,* Ivan R. Dee, 1994.

A first-hand account of the disintegration of the communist state written by a correspondent of the *Baltimore Sun.*

Amanda Smith, "PW Interviews: Lois Lowry," in *Publishers Weekly,* Vol. 229, No.8, February 21, 1986, pp. 152-53.

An exploration of Lowry's life and work that considers her philosophy of writing for children, and her thoughts about laughter, adaptability, and human relations.

Lesley J. Smith *Forced Exit:* The *Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder,* Times Books, 1997.

Openly opposed to euthanasia on principle, Smith has a response to every conceivable argument in defense.

Laura M. Zaidman, "Lois Lowry," in *American Writers for Children Since 1960. Fiction* (Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 52), edited by Glenn Estes, Gale Research, 1986, pp. 249-261.

This essay summarizes Lowry's personal and professional life, summarizes criticism of Lowry's pre-1986 work, and includes an excerpt from one of her manuscripts that shows her revisions.

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Patty Campbell, review in *The Horn Book Magazine,* Vol LXIX, No 6, November-December, 1993, pp. 717-21. Jane Inglis, review in *The School Librarian,* Vol. 43, No. I, February, 1995, pp. 31-32.

Lois Lowry, Newbery Medal Acceptance speech, delivered at the American Library Association's annual meeting June, 1994, printed in *The Horn Magazine,* Vol. LXX, No.4, JulyAugust 1994, pp. 414-22.

Gary D. Schmidt, review in *The Five Owls,* Vol. VIII, No. I, September-October, 1993, pp. 14-15.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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