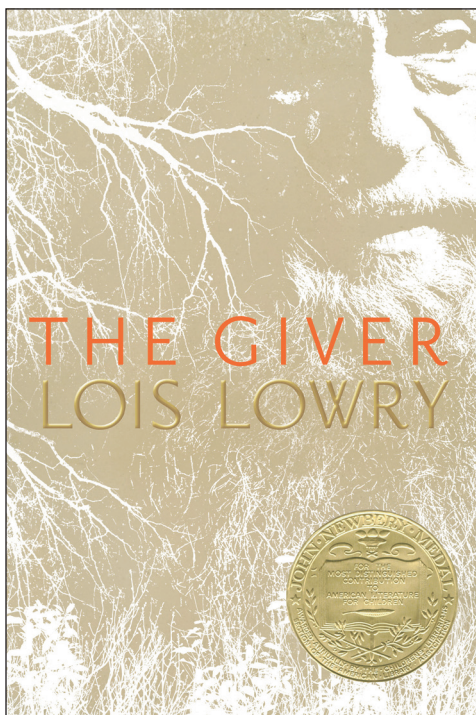


# THE GIVER

by LOIS LOWRY



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Jonas lives in an orderly community where everyone is treated the same. The dress is uniform, and there is no color or music. His world is one without conflict, poverty, injustice, or inequality. Children are well mannered, and families have a designated time to share their feelings. There is school, recreation, and time to interact with friends. Volunteerism is mandatory and at age twelve children are given their life Assignments in an annual ceremony presided over by the Chief Elder. Jonas isn't surprised that his fun-loving friend Asher is named Assistant Director of Recreation, or that his caring friend Fiona is appointed Caretaker of the Old. But he is puzzled by his own assignment—Receiver of Memory.

During his training with the Giver, Jonas receives pleasant memories such as snow, sunshine, and color. As Jonas acquires more memories, he begins to question the dark side of his seemingly perfect world, and for the first time in his life he makes a decision—one that changes everything for him, and for his community.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Define *utopia* and *dystopia*. Ask students to share novels they have read that represent a utopian and dystopian community. Divide them into small groups and ask them to prepare an argument about whether a truly utopian community is possible.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Language: Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 6-8.4, Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.1, 6-8.3: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.6.

## DISCUSSION

- Ask students to define *family*. Contrast families in our society to the way families are formed in Jonas's community. Debate the pros and cons of all families being the same.
- Foreshadowing is a literary device that hints at what's to come later in the plot. What does the bridge west of town foreshadow and the airplane (p. 1) foreshadow?
- Symbolism is the use of a symbol to represent an idea. What is the symbolism of the sled? What about the apple, the river, Jonas's pale eyes, and Gabriel's name?
- A euphemism is a term used to soften the meaning of a word that may suggest something unpleasant. What euphemisms does Lowry use in the novel? Describe Jonas's reaction when he discovers the real meaning of "Release." How is this moment a turning point in the novel?
- Discuss the rules of the community. How does discipline begin in the Nurturing Center? Explain how the Speaker is used to call out those who have broken a rule. Why don't the people question the rules and the way they are enforced? Lily breaks a rule when she calls Gabriel by his name. What consequences might she face if anyone outside the family unit hears her? Discuss why Jonas is exempt from the rules once he becomes the Receiver. How does this cause him problems within his family and among his friends?



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- What is the purpose of the pills when people begin to have “stirrings”? Why doesn’t Jonas take them after he becomes the Receiver? How does this explain his feelings for Fiona?
- The people in the community don’t feel strong emotions, yet they are sometimes frightened. What do they fear the most? When does Jonas first experience fear? How do his fears become more evident as the plot develops? Jonas is apprehensive about the approaching Ceremony of the Twelves. Explain the relationship between apprehension and fear. Which is the stronger emotion? Debate whether Jonas feels apprehension or fear when he receives memories.
- Discuss the stages of childhood in Jonas’s community. How does each stage offer a bit more independence? Age isn’t important once children reach twelve and receive their life assignments. At what age does a person become an adult in our society? Debate how the age of adulthood varies in different cultures. Describe the friendship between Jonas and Asher. How does their friendship change after they receive their assignments?
- Jonas has never made a choice about anything until he becomes the Receiver. Discuss his decision to leave the community. Why is Elsewhere safer than his fate in his own community? Why does the Giver think it dangerous for people to have choices? Discuss the choice that the Giver makes at the end of the novel.
- Discuss the memory that teaches Jonas about love. Explain his love for and special relationship with Gabriel. Cite evidence that the Giver feels love. Does Jonas love the Giver? Discuss how love contributes to Jonas’s final decision.
- Students study the precision of language in school. In an apology for being late to school, Asher says that he got “distraught” while watching the salmon at the hatchery. The teacher corrects him by writing “distracted” on the instructional board. What is the difference in “distraught” and “distracted”? Discuss times in the novel when Jonas is “distracted” and

“distraught.” How does being “distraught” contribute to his decision to take Gabriel when he escapes?

- Why does the Giver say the job has aged him? How does he blame himself for the last failure? Explain why he is so willing to help Jonas escape. Predict the changes in the community after Jonas leaves.
- How does Elsewhere hold Jonas’s and Gabriel’s past and future?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Reading: Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 6-8.1, 6-8.2, 6-8.3, Craft and Structure RL. 6-8.4, 6-8.5; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.1, 6-8.3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.6.

## REACHING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

- “Home” is a show-stopping song in the musical *The Wiz*. Have students write an essay that draws a parallel between the following stanza of that song to Jonas’s world after he receives memories:

Suddenly my world has changed its face  
But I still know where I’m going  
I have had my mind spun around in space  
And yet I’ve watched it growing

Instruct them to use direct quotes to illustrate their points. Encourage peer editing for clarity, grammar, and spelling.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 6-8.9; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6-8.3, Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6-8.5; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 6-8.1, 6-8.2, Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

- Explain the following simile: “It’s like going downhill through deep snow on a sled.” (p. 78) What is the Giver telling Jonas? Why doesn’t Jonas understand? Write a simile that explains what Jonas feels when he witnesses the Release of the twin.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 6-8.5.



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- Discuss whether *The Giver* is written in third person omniscient or third person limited. Ask students to select a favorite passage and write it in first person from Jonas's point of view. How does this change the story for the reader? Allow students to share their writing in class.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Reading: Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 6-8.6; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6-8.3; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-8.1, 6-8.2.

- Jonas learns pain and loneliness, solitude and joy. Instruct students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to find a poem that best represents one of these emotions. Read the poem aloud in class and justify the selection.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 6-8.9; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.2.

- Jonas has all the qualities of the next Receiver: Intelligence, Integrity, Courage, and the Capacity to See Beyond. Divide the class into four groups and assign them one of these qualities. Instruct them to identify passages in the novel that reveals that Jonas is the best choice for his assignment. The fifth quality is Wisdom. Debate whether Jonas gains that by the end of the novel.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Reading: Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 6-8.1; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.1, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4.

- Conduct a class Ceremony of the Twelves. Instruct the class to match assignments with each student. This should be decided by nomination and vote. Elect a Chief Elder to preside over the ceremony. Allow students to work in groups and write the justification for the assignments.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.1, 6-8.3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4.

- Students in Jonas's community study the following: Language and Communication, Commerce and Industry, Science and Technology, and Civil Procedures and

Government. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to write a description for one course of study. Then have them prepare and teach a lesson for Jonas's class. Include multimedia components to illuminate the lecture.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards– Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.1, 6-8.3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.5; Language: Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

- Jonas's mother has a prominent position in the Department of Justice. Conduct a trial of a repeat offender of community rules. State the rule and the transgression. Include an apology from the guilty party. What happens on the third offense?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.6; Language: Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

- The Giver says, "We've never completely mastered Sameness. I suppose the genetic scientists are still hard at work trying to work the kinks out." (p. 95) Sponsor a class debate titled "Diversity v. Sameness." Use quotes from the novel to illustrate all opinions. Tape the debates and share with other classes.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.6; Language: Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

- Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby, was born in Great Britain on July 25, 1978. Have students use books in the library or sites on the Internet to read about her birth. What were the ethical and religious issues surrounding her birth? Divide the class into small groups and ask them to tape a news feature that might have aired the week of her birth. Include an interview with her parents, doctors, scientists, religious leaders, and people on the street. Finally, ask Jonas his views regarding assisted reproductive technology.



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Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 6-8.7, 6-8.8, 6-8.9; Reading-Informational Texts: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI. 6-8.7, 6-8.8, 6-8.9; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6-8.2, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6-8.4, 6-8.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-8.1, Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

- The Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov/art](http://www.cdc.gov/art)) monitors assisted reproductive technology in the United States. Study the statistics on the website and write a three-page paper that explores why the government collects this information. Make a concluding statement about how this information helps couples with reproductive problems.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6-8.4, Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 6-8.7, 6-8.8, 6-8.9; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-8.1, 6-8.2, Knowledge of Language L. 6-8.3.

## VOCABULARY

- Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them, taking clues from the context. Such a list may include *palpable* (p. 3), *defiant* (p. 5), *adherence* (p. 12), *chastise* (p. 20), *reprieve* (p. 42), *transgressions* (p. 45), *meticulously* (p. 48), *scrupulously* (p. 49), *prestige* (p. 53), *relish* (p. 68), *requisitioned* (p. 69), *steeled* (p. 70), *admonition* (p. 89), *phenomenon* (p. 91), *assimilated* (p. 104), *ominous* (p. 113), *carnage* (p. 119), *pervaded* (p. 122), *obsolete* (p. 127), *permeated* (p. 131), *solace* (p. 161), and *vigilant* (p. 170). Ask students to check a dictionary for the meaning of each word. How well did they do?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 6-8.4.

This guide was created by Pat Scales, Children's Literature Consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

