

The Giver

by Lois Lowry

When Jonas is singled out to be the Receiver of all the memories of the people in his well-regulated community, he knows both pain and pleasure for the first time.

THEMES

community, euthanasia, honesty, memories, problem-solving, family, friendship, responsibility, utopia, choices

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. These terms should be defined and discussed:

ironic, palpable, transgression, awed, adherence, fret, chastise, petulantly, droning, hoarded, remorse, nondescript, mystified, serene, fragile, chortled, disquieting, infraction, dosage, throng, cringed, infringed, meticulously, scrupulously, prestige, ruefully, avert, benign, jaunty, indolence, logistic, throb, reeled, astonishing, torrent, glee, obsolete, conveyance, wryly, mutilated, sinuous, daub, anguish, spasms, ominous, placidly, solace, taut, vigilant, lethargy

B. Consider the following questions:

1. If you could make any change in the world, from controlling the climate to changing how people handle their emotions, what changes would you make?
2. What would the world be like if everybody were the same?
3. How would you like living in a world with no color? What colors would you miss the most?
4. How far should we go to protect people from bad things happening to them?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:

1. Begin with Chapters 1-4: Describe the community Jonas lives in. What's good about it? What might not be so good? What happens when he looks at the apple? How are wrongdoers punished? What happens when children turn twelve? How do the Elders choose each child's assignment? Why doesn't Mother want Lily to be a Birthmother? How has Father saved Gabriel from release? What qualities does Jonas possess that leads to his being chosen to be the Receiver?
2. Advance to Chapters 5-8: How does Jonas feel about being chosen to be the Receiver? Which of the rules for being the Receiver might be the hardest for him to follow? What does the Giver tell him about the apple and Fiona's hair? Why have people stop seeing colors? What frustrates Jonas in his training? Why does the Giver say they need a Receiver? What happens when Gabriel sleeps in Jonas's room? How does Jonas feel

when he gives giving Gabriel the memory of snow? Why doesn't he tell the Giver? How do his parents respond when he asks them if they love him?

3. Complete the story with Chapters 9-11: How does Jonas feel now he isn't taking his pills? How does the Giver teach him about release? How does Jonas feel about what he sees? How does he feel toward his family now, especially his father? What had happened when the Giver tried to train a Receiver before? Why does the Giver decide Jonas should leave the community? Why does the Giver decide to stay behind? Why does Jonas have to leave earlier than planned? What do he and Gabriel encounter on the journey? What worries Jonas as they travel in the snowstorm? Where does he find the strength to go on? What does he see when he reaches the top of the hill?

B. For Discussion:

1. Trace the term "release" from the first mention to where Jonas realizes what it means. How soon did you suspect what it meant?
2. Jonas is shocked when his instructions tell him he may lie. What does he discover about lying as he takes his training?
3. Why have the people created this community? Why have they discarded the memories of the past? Why have they done away with color?
4. What are the advantages of everyone having the same experience? The disadvantages?
5. Discuss the ending. What do you think the author intends to convey?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

Give wide leeway in working with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

A. Language Arts:

1. Have students read other stories about utopian communities, such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984*, or H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* to compare with *The Giver*.

2. "Release" is a euphemism for euthanasia. Discuss euphemisms such as "passed away" for death. Why do we use euphemisms?
3. Have students read or listen to *Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry. In what ways might this be a companion volume to *The Giver*?
4. Have students write about what might have happened in the community after Jonas left.

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. Show the community, with the look-alike houses and other places like the Nurturing Center, the House of the Old, and the Annex where Jonas goes for his training, and other buildings mentioned in the story. These could all be in black-and-white with a touch of red on an apple and Fiona's hair. Show the outside world with snow, rain, wildlife, and color to contrast with the community of Sameness.
2. Have students spend a day looking at everything in a color of their choice, then discuss the experience. What would it be like to live in a black and white world?
3. Assign a group to select records, tapes, or CDs from the library that might serve as appropriate background music to some of the scenes. They might choose selections from Aaron Copeland's *Appalachian Spring* or *Our Town* for the community or family scenes and the music of Tchaikovsky for the storm when Jonas goes on his journey. Peaceful music such as compositions by Debussy might be appropriate for the visit to the House of the Old.
4. Have students watch the movie *Pleasantville* and compare with *The Giver*, especially the way color comes into the lives of the black-and-white community.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students research how various cultures celebrate coming of age, such as Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, Africans, or Jews.
2. Have students find out about attempts to form utopian communities, such as the early Mormons in Utah, Oneida in New York, or New Harmony in Indiana. Why is it difficult to maintain a utopia? Another group might learn more about communities such as the Amish or the

Mennonites. Why have these communities rejected certain aspects of modern life?

3. Have students think about their skills and interests and discuss what career they might like. Would they like to have their career chosen for them by someone older and wiser? Why or why not?
4. In Jonas's community, the old, the weak, the law-breakers, and even the redundant like an identical twin are "released." Have students research the pros and cons of euthanasia and hold a debate.

D. Science and Math:

1. The community prospers entirely without money, but through sharing resources. Have students learn about the barter system. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?
2. Have students learn about how memories are stored in the brain. What are the known causes of mental disorders like Alzheimer's?
3. The community did away with weather by a system of climate control. How might we use our technology to prevent disasters such as tornadoes and floods? Could we eventually do away with winter? Would we want to? Why or why not?
4. Through genetic engineers, the community is able to remove the concept of color from the people. What causes us to see color? What animals cannot see color? Could there be colors we can't see, as there are sounds we can't hear?

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