

The Giver (Giver Quartet)

by

Lois Lowry



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Synopsis

In Lois Lowry's Newbery Medal-winning classic, twelve-year-old Jonas lives in a seemingly ideal world. Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver does he begin to understand the dark secrets behind his fragile community. Life in the community where Jonas lives is idyllic. Designated birthmothers produce newchildren, who are assigned to appropriate family units. Citizens are assigned their partners and their jobs. No one thinks to ask questions. Everyone obeys. Everyone is the same. Except Jonas. Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver of Memory does he begin to understand the dark, complex secrets behind his fragile community. Gradually Jonas learns that power lies in feelings. But when his own power is put to the test—when he must try to save someone he loves—he may not be ready. Is it too soon? Or too late? Told with deceptive simplicity, this is the provocative story of a boy who experiences something incredible and undertakes something impossible. In the telling it questions every value we have taken for granted and reexamines our most deeply held beliefs. The Giver has become one of the most influential novels of our time. Don't miss the powerful companion novels in Lois Lowry's Giver Quartet: Gathering Blue, Messenger, and Son.

Sort review

"A powerful and provocative novel." — New York Times
"Wrought with admirable skill—the emptiness and menace underlying this Utopia emerge step by inexorable step: a richly provocative novel." — Kirkus Reviews (starred review)
"Lowry is once again in top form raising many questions while answering few, and unwinding a tale fit for the most adventurous readers." — Publishers Weekly (starred review)
"The simplicity and directness of Lowry's writing force readers to grapple with their own thoughts." — Booklist (starred review)
"Lois Lowry has written a fascinating, thoughtful science-fiction novel. The story is skillfully written; the air of disquiet is delicately insinuated. And the theme of balancing the virtues of freedom and security is beautifully presented." — Horn Book (starred review)
"The Giver has things to say that cannot be said too often, and I hope there will be many, many young people who will be willing to listen. A warning in narrative form." — Washington Post
About the Author
Lois Lowry is the author of more than forty books for children and young adults, including the New York Times bestselling Giver Quartet and popular Anastasia Krupnik series. She has received countless honors, among them the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, the California Young Reader's Medal, and the Mark Twain Award. She received Newbery Medals for two of her novels, Number the Stars and The Giver.
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1 It was almost December, and Jonas was beginning to be frightened. No. Wrong word, Jonas thought. Frightened meant that deep, sickening feeling of something terrible about to happen. Frightened was the way he had felt a year ago when an unidentified aircraft had overflowed the community twice. He had seen it both times. Squinting toward the sky, he had

seen the sleek jet, almost a blur at its high speed, go past, and a second later heard the blast of sound that followed. Then one more time, a moment later, from the opposite direction, the same plane. At first, he had been only fascinated. He had never seen aircraft so close, for it was against the rules for Pilots to fly over the community. Occasionally, when supplies were delivered by cargo planes to the landing field across the river, the children rode their bicycles to the riverbank and watched, intrigued, the unloading and then the takeoff directed to the west, always away from the community. But the aircraft a year ago had been different. It was not a squat, fat-bellied cargo plane but a needle-nosed single-pilot jet. Jonas, looking around anxiously, had seen others—adults as well as children—stop what they were doing and wait, confused, for an explanation of the frightening event. Then all of the citizens had been ordered to go into the nearest building and stay there. IMMEDIATELY, the rasping voice through the speakers had said. LEAVE YOUR BICYCLES WHERE THEY ARE. Instantly, obediently, Jonas had dropped his bike on its side on the path behind his family's dwelling. He had run indoors and stayed there, alone. His parents were both at work, and his little sister, Lily, was at the Childcare Center where she spent her after-school hours. Looking through the front window, he had seen no people: none of the busy afternoon crew of Street Cleaners, Landscape Workers, and Food Delivery people who usually populated the community at that time of day. He saw only the abandoned bikes here and there on their sides; an upturned wheel on one was still revolving slowly. He had been frightened then. The sense of his own community silent, waiting, had made his stomach churn. He had trembled. But it had been nothing. Within minutes the speakers had crackled again, and the voice, reassuring now and less urgent, had explained that a Pilot-in-Training had misread his navigational instructions and made a wrong turn. Desperately the Pilot had been trying to make his way back before his error was noticed. NEEDLESS TO SAY, HE WILL BE RELEASED, the voice had said, followed by silence. There was an ironic tone to that final message, as if the Speaker found it amusing; and Jonas had smiled a little, though he knew what a grim statement it had been. For a contributing citizen to be released from the community was a final decision, a terrible punishment, an overwhelming statement of failure. Even the children were scolded if they used the term lightly at play, jeering at a teammate who missed a catch or stumbled in a race. Jonas had done it once, had shouted at his best friend, "That's it, Asher! You're released!" when Asher's clumsy error had lost a match for his team. He had been taken aside for a brief and serious talk by the coach, had hung his head with guilt and embarrassment, and apologized to Asher after the game. Now, thinking about the feeling of fear as he pedaled home along the river path, he remembered that moment of palpable, stomach-sinking terror when the aircraft had streaked above. It was not what he was feeling now with December approaching. He searched for the right word to describe his own feeling. Jonas was careful about language. Not like his friend, Asher, who talked too fast and mixed things up, scrambling words and phrases until they were barely recognizable and often very funny. Jonas grinned, remembering the morning that Asher had dashed into the classroom, late as usual, arriving breathlessly in the middle of the chanting of the morning anthem. When the class took their seats at the conclusion of the

patriotic hymn, Asher remained standing to make his public apology as was required. "I apologize for inconveniencing my learning community." Asher ran through the standard apology phrase rapidly, still catching his breath. The Instructor and class waited patiently for his explanation. The students had all been grinning, because they had listened to Asher's explanations so many times before. "I left home at the correct time but when I was riding along near the hatchery, the crew was separating some salmon. I guess I just got distraught, watching them." "I apologize to my classmates," Asher concluded. He smoothed his ruffled tunic and sat down. "We accept your apology, Asher." The class recited the standard response in unison. Many of the students were biting their lips to keep from laughing. "I accept your apology, Asher," the Instructor said. He was smiling. "And I thank you, because once again you have provided an opportunity for a lesson in language. 'Distraught' is too strong an adjective to describe salmon-viewing." He turned and wrote "distraught" on the instructional board. Beside it he wrote "distracted." Jonas, nearing his home now, smiled at the recollection. Thinking, still, as he wheeled his bike into its narrow port beside the door, he realized that frightened was the wrong word to describe his feelings, now that December was almost here. It was too strong an adjective. He had waited a long time for this special December. Now that it was almost upon him, he wasn't frightened, but he was . . . eager, he decided. He was eager for it to come. And he was excited, certainly. All of the Elevens were excited about the event that would be coming so soon. But there was a little shudder of nervousness when he thought about it, about what might happen. Apprehensive, Jonas decided. That's what I am. "Who wants to be the first tonight, for feelings?" Jonas's father asked, at the conclusion of their evening meal. It was one of the rituals, the evening telling of feelings. Sometimes Jonas and his sister, Lily, argued over turns, over who would get to go first. Their parents, of course, were part of the ritual; they, too, told their feelings each evening. But like all parents—all adults—they didn't fight and wheedle for their turn. Nor did Jonas, tonight. His feelings were too complicated this evening. He wanted to share them, but he wasn't eager to begin the process of sifting through his own complicated emotions, even with the help that he knew his parents could give. "You go, Lily," he said, seeing his sister, who was much younger—only a Seven—wiggling with impatience in her chair. "I felt very angry this afternoon," Lily announced. "My Childcare group was at the play area, and we had a visiting group of Sevens, and they didn't obey the rules at all. One of them—a male; I don't know his name—kept going right to the front of the line for the slide, even though the rest of us were all waiting. I felt so angry at him. I made my hand into a fist, like this." She held up a clenched fist and the rest of the family smiled at her small defiant gesture. "Why do you think the visitors didn't obey the rules?" Mother asked. Lily considered, and shook her head. "I don't know. They acted like . . . like . . ." "Animals?" Jonas suggested. He laughed. "That's right," Lily said, laughing too. "Like animals." Neither child knew what the word meant, exactly, but it was often used to describe someone uneducated or clumsy, someone who didn't fit in. "Where were the visitors from?" Father asked. Lily frowned, trying to remember. "Our leader told us, when he made the welcome speech, but I can't remember. I guess I wasn't paying attention. It was from another community.

They had to leave very early, and they had their midday meal on the bus."Mother nodded. "Do you think it's possible that their rules may be different? And so they simply didn't know what your play area rules were?"Lily shrugged, and nodded. "I suppose." "You've visited other communities, haven't you?" Jonas asked. "My group has, often."Lily nodded again. "When we were Sixes, we went and shared a whole school day with a group of Sixes in their community." "How did you feel when you were there?"Lily frowned. "I felt strange. Because their methods were different. They were learning usages that my group hadn't learned yet, so we felt stupid."Father was listening with interest. "I'm thinking, Lily," he said, "about the boy who didn't obey the rules today. Do you think it's possible that he felt strange and stupid, being in a new place with rules that he didn't know about?"Lily pondered that. "Yes," she said, finally. "I feel a little sorry for him," Jonas said, "even though I don't even know him. I feel sorry for anyone who is in a place where he feels strange and stupid." "How do you feel now, Lily?" Father asked. "Still angry?" "I guess not," Lily decided. "I guess I feel a little sorry for him. And sorry I made a fist." She grinned. Jonas smiled back at his sister. Lily's feelings were always straightforward, fairly simple, usually easy to resolve. He guessed that his own had been, too, when he was a Seven. He listened politely, though not very attentively, while his father took his turn, describing a feeling of worry that he'd had that day at work: a concern about one of the newchildren who wasn't doing well. Jonas's father's title was Nurturer. He and the other Nurturers were responsible for all the physical and emotional needs of every newchild during its earliest life. It was a very important job, Jonas knew, but it wasn't one that interested him much. "What gender is it?" Lily asked. "Male," Father said. "He's a sweet little male with a lovely disposition. But he isn't growing as fast as he should, and he doesn't sleep soundly. We have him in the extra care section for supplementary nurturing, but the committee's beginning to talk about releasing him." "Oh, no," Mother murmured sympathetically. "I know how sad that must make you feel." Jonas and Lily both nodded sympathetically as well. Release of newchildren was always sad, because they hadn't had a chance to enjoy life within the community yet. And they hadn't done anything wrong. There were only two occasions of release which were not punishment. Release of the elderly, which was a time of celebration for a life well and fully lived; and release of a newchild, which always brought a sense of what-could-we-have-done. This was especially troubling for the Nurturers, like Father, who felt they had failed somehow. But it happened very rarely. "Well," Father said, "I'm going to keep trying. I may ask the committee for permission to bring him here at night, if you don't mind. You know what the night-crew Nurturers are like. I think this little guy needs something extra." "Of course," Mother said, and Jonas and Lily nodded. They had heard Father complain about the night crew before. It was a lesser job, night-crew nurturing, assigned to those who lacked the interest or skills or insight for the more vital jobs of the daytime hours. Most of the people on the night crew had not even been given spouses because they lacked, somehow, the essential capacity to connect to others, which was required for the creation of a family unit. "Maybe we could even keep him," Lily suggested sweetly, trying to look innocent. The look was fake, Jonas knew; they all knew. "Lily," Mother reminded her, smiling, "you know the rules." Two children—one

male, one female—to each family unit. It was written very clearly in the rules. Lily giggled. “Well,” she said, “I thought maybe just this once.” Next, Mother, who held a prominent position at the Department of Justice, talked about her feelings. Today a repeat offender had been brought before her, someone who had broken the rules before. Someone who she hoped had been adequately and fairly punished, and who had been restored to his place: to his job, his home, his family unit. To see him brought before her a second time caused her overwhelming feelings of frustration and anger. And even guilt, that she hadn’t made a difference in his life. “I feel frightened, too, for him,” she confessed. “You know that there’s no third chance. The rules say that if there’s a third transgression, he simply has to be released.” Jonas shivered. He knew it happened. There was even a boy in his group of Elevens whose father had been released years before. No one ever mentioned it; the disgrace was unspeakable. It was hard to imagine. Lily stood up and went to her mother. She stroked her mother’s arm. From his place at the table, Father reached over and took her hand. Jonas reached for the other. One by one, they comforted her. Soon she smiled, thanked them, and murmured that she felt soothed. The ritual continued. “Jonas?” Father asked. “You’re last, tonight.” Jonas sighed. This evening he almost would have preferred to keep his feelings hidden. But it was, of course, against the rules. “I’m feeling apprehensive,” he confessed, glad that the appropriate descriptive word had finally come to him. “Why is that, son?” His father looked concerned. “I know there’s really nothing to worry about,” Jonas explained, “and that every adult has been through it. I know you have, Father, and you too, Mother. But it’s the Ceremony that I’m apprehensive about. It’s almost December.” Lily looked up, her eyes wide. “The Ceremony of Twelve,” she whispered in an awed voice. Even the smallest children—Lily’s age and younger—knew that it lay in the future for each of them. “I’m glad you told us of your feelings,” Father said. “Lily,” Mother said, beckoning to the little girl, “go on now and get into your nightclothes. Father and I are going to stay here and talk to Jonas for a while.” Lily sighed, but obediently she got down from her chair. “Privately?” she asked. Mother nodded. “Yes,” she said, “this talk will be a private one with Jonas.”² Jonas watched as his father poured a fresh cup of coffee. He waited. “You know,” his father finally said, “every December was exciting to me when I was young. And it has been for you and Lily, too, I’m sure. Each December brings such changes.” Jonas nodded. He could remember the Decembers back to when he had become, well, probably a Four. The earlier ones were lost to him. But he observed them each year, and he remembered Lily’s earliest Decembers. He remembered when his family received Lily, the day she was named, the day that she had become a One. The Ceremony for the Ones was always noisy and fun. Each December, all the newchildren born in the previous year turned One. One at a time—there were always fifty in each year’s group, if none had been released—they had been brought to the stage by the Nurturers who had cared for them since birth. Some were already walking, wobbly on their unsteady legs; others were no more than a few days old, wrapped in blankets, held by their Nurturers. “I enjoy the Naming,” Jonas said. His mother agreed, smiling. “The year we got Lily, we knew, of course, that we’d receive our female, because we’d made our application and been approved. But I’d been wondering and wondering what her name

would be.”“I could have sneaked a look at the list prior to the ceremony,” Father confided. “The committee always makes the list in advance, and it’s right there in the office at the Nurturing Center.”“As a matter of fact,” he went on, “I feel a little guilty about this. But I did go in this afternoon and looked to see if this year’s Naming list had been made yet. It was right there in the office, and I looked up number Thirty-six—that’s the little guy I’ve been concerned about—because it occurred to me that it might enhance his nurturing if I could call him by a name. Just privately, of course, when no one else is around.”“Did you find it?” Jonas asked. He was fascinated. It didn’t seem a terribly important rule, but the fact that his father had broken a rule at all awed him. He glanced at his mother, the one responsible for adherence to the rules, and was relieved that she was smiling. His father nodded. “His name—if he makes it to the Naming without being released, of course—is to be Gabriel. So I whisper that to him when I feed him every four hours, and during exercise and playtime. If no one can hear me.”“I call him Gabe, actually,” he said, and grinned. “Gabe.” Jonas tried it out. A good name, he decided. Though Jonas had only become a Five the year that they acquired Lily and learned her name, he remembered the excitement, the conversations at home, wondering about her: how she would look, who she would be, how she would fit into their established family unit. He remembered climbing the steps to the stage with his parents, his father by his side that year instead of with the Nurturers, since it was the year that he would be given a newchild of his own. He remembered his mother taking the newchild, his sister, into her arms, while the document was read to the assembled family units. “Newchild Twenty-three,” the Namer had read. “Lily.” He remembered his father’s look of delight, and that his father had whispered, “She’s one of my favorites. I was hoping for her to be the one.” The crowd had clapped, and Jonas had grinned. He liked his sister’s name. Lily, barely awake, had waved her small fist. Then they had stepped down to make room for the next family unit. “When I was an Eleven,” his father said now, “as you are, Jonas, I was very impatient, waiting for the Ceremony of Twelve. It’s a long two days. I remember that I enjoyed the Ones, as I always do, but that I didn’t pay much attention to the other ceremonies, except for my sister’s. She became a Nine that year, and got her bicycle. I’d been teaching her to ride mine, even though technically I wasn’t supposed to.” Jonas laughed. It was one of the few rules that was not taken very seriously and was almost always broken. The children all received their bicycles at Nine; they were not allowed to ride bicycles before then. But almost always, the older brothers and sisters had secretly taught the younger ones. Jonas had been thinking already about teaching Lily. There was talk about changing the rule and giving the bicycles at an earlier age. A committee was studying the idea. When something went to a committee for study, the people always joked about it. They said that the committee members would become Elders by the time the rule change was made. Rules were very hard to change. Sometimes, if it was a very important rule—unlike the one governing the age for bicycles—it would have to go, eventually, to The Receiver for a decision. The Receiver was the most important Elder. Jonas had never even seen him, that he knew of; someone in a position of such importance lived and worked alone. But the committee would never bother The Receiver with a

question about bicycles; they would simply fret and argue about it themselves for years, until the citizens forgot that it had ever gone to them for study. His father continued. "So I watched and cheered when my sister, Katya, became a Nine and removed her hair ribbons and got her bicycle," Father went on. "Then I didn't pay much attention to the Tens and Elevens. And finally, at the end of the second day, which seemed to go on forever, it was my turn. It was the Ceremony of Twelve." Jonas shivered. He pictured his father, who must have been a shy and quiet boy, for he was a shy and quiet man, seated with his group, waiting to be called to the stage. The Ceremony of Twelve was the last of the Ceremonies. The most important. "I remember how proud my parents looked—and my sister, too; even though she wanted to be out riding the bicycle publicly, she stopped fidgeting and was very still and attentive when my turn came." "But to be honest, Jonas," his father said, "for me there was not the element of suspense that there is with your Ceremony. Because I was already fairly certain of what my Assignment was to be." Jonas was surprised. There was no way, really, to know in advance. It was a secret selection, made by the leaders of the community, the Committee of Elders, who took the responsibility so seriously that there were never even any jokes made about Assignments. His mother seemed surprised, too. "How could you have known?" she asked. His father smiled his gentle smile. "Well, it was clear to me—and my parents later confessed that it had been obvious to them, too—what my aptitude was. I had always loved the newchildren more than anything. When my friends in my age group were holding bicycle races, or building toy vehicles or bridges with their construction sets, or—" "All the things I do with my friends," Jonas pointed out, and his mother nodded in agreement. "I always participated, of course, because as children we must experience all of those things. And I studied hard in school, as you do, Jonas. But again and again, during free time, I found myself drawn to the newchildren. I spent almost all of my volunteer hours helping in the Nurturing Center. Of course the Elders knew that, from their observation." Jonas nodded. During the past year he had been aware of the increasing level of observation. In school, at recreation time, and during volunteer hours, he had noticed the Elders watching him and the other Elevens. He had seen them taking notes. He knew, too, that the Elders were meeting for long hours with all of the instructors that he and the other Elevens had had during their years of school. "So I expected it, and I was pleased, but not at all surprised, when my Assignment was announced as Nurturer," Father explained. "Did everyone applaud, even though they weren't surprised?" Jonas asked. "Oh, of course. They were happy for me, that my Assignment was what I wanted most. I felt very fortunate." His father smiled. "Were any of the Elevens disappointed, your year?" Jonas asked. Unlike his father, he had no idea what his Assignment would be. But he knew that some would disappoint him. Though he respected his father's work, Nurturer would not be his wish. And he didn't envy Laborers at all. His father thought. "No, I don't think so. Of course the Elders are so careful in their observations and selections." "I think it's probably the most important job in our community," his mother commented. "My friend Yoshiko was surprised by her selection as Doctor," Father said, "but she was thrilled. And let's see, there was Andrei—I remember that when we were boys he never wanted to do physical things. He spent all the

recreation time he could with his construction set, and his volunteer hours were always on building sites. The Elders knew that, of course. Andrei was given the Assignment of Engineer and he was delighted. “Andrei later designed the bridge that crosses the river to the west of town,” Jonas’s mother said. “It wasn’t there when we were children.” “There are very rarely disappointments, Jonas. I don’t think you need to worry about that,” his father reassured him. “And if there are, you know there’s an appeal process.” But they all laughed at that—an appeal went to a committee for study. “I worry a little about Asher’s Assignment,” Jonas confessed. “Asher’s such fun. But he doesn’t really have any serious interests. He makes a game out of everything.” His father chuckled. “You know,” he said, “I remember when Asher was a newchild at the Nurturing Center, before he was named. He never cried. He giggled and laughed at everything. All of us on the staff enjoyed nurturing Asher.” “The Elders know Asher,” his mother said. “They’ll find exactly the right Assignment for him. I don’t think you need to worry about him. But, Jonas, let me warn you about something that may not have occurred to you. I know I didn’t think about it until after my Ceremony of Twelve.” “What’s that?” “Well, it’s the last of the Ceremonies, as you know. After Twelve, age isn’t important. Most of us even lose track of how old we are as time passes, though the information is in the Hall of Open Records, and we could go and look it up if we wanted to. What’s important is the preparation for adult life, and the training you’ll receive in your Assignment.” “I know that,” Jonas said. “Everyone knows that.” “But it means,” his mother went on, “that you’ll move into a new group. And each of your friends will. You’ll no longer be spending your time with your group of Elevens. After the Ceremony of Twelve, you’ll be with your Assignment group, with those in training. No more volunteer hours. No more recreation hours. So your friends will no longer be as close.” Jonas shook his head. “Asher and I will always be friends,” he said firmly. “And there will still be school.” “That’s true,” his father agreed. “But what your mother said is true as well. There will be changes.” “Good changes, though,” his mother pointed out. “After my Ceremony of Twelve, I missed my childhood recreation. But when I entered my training for Law and Justice, I found myself with people who shared my interests. I made friends on a new level, friends of all ages.” “Did you still play at all, after Twelve?” Jonas asked. “Occasionally,” his mother replied. “But it didn’t seem as important to me.” “I did,” his father said, laughing. “I still do. Every day, at the Nurturing Center, I play bounce-on-the-knee, and peek-a-boo, and hug-the-teddy.” He reached over and stroked Jonas’s neatly trimmed hair. “Fun doesn’t end when you become Twelve.” Lily appeared, wearing her nightclothes, in the doorway. She gave an impatient sigh. “This is certainly a very long private conversation,” she said. “And there are certain people waiting for their comfort object.” “Lily,” her mother said fondly, “you’re very close to being an Eight, and when you’re an Eight, your comfort object will be taken away. It will be recycled to the younger children. You should be starting to go off to sleep without it.” But her father had already gone to the shelf and taken down the stuffed elephant which was kept there. Many of the comfort objects, like Lily’s, were soft, stuffed, imaginary creatures. Jonas’s had been called a bear. “Here you are, Lily-billy,” he said. “I’ll come help you remove your hair ribbons.” Jonas and his mother rolled their eyes, yet they watched

affectionately as Lily and her father headed to her sleeping room with the stuffed elephant that had been given to her as her comfort object when she was born. His mother moved to her big desk and opened her briefcase; her work never seemed to end, even when she was at home in the evening. Jonas went to his own desk and began to sort through his school papers for the evening's assignment. But his mind was still on December and the coming Ceremony. Though he had been reassured by the talk with his parents, he hadn't the slightest idea what Assignment the Elders would be selecting for his future, or how he might feel about it when the day came. Read more

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What people say about this book

Tigerlily64, "A Futuristic Society, Engrossing And Thought-Provoking. What is the ideal society that you can imagine? Would you like to be happy? Does a society with no war, no disease, no pain or suffering appeal to you? Would you like to have someone else choose a very compatible mate for you and not have to worry about dating? How would you like a job that is guaranteed and is enjoyable and fits your interests and personality? The Giver is about such a society. What is the trade-off? What is missing in the people's lives? The Giver is a very thought-provoking book. Jonas lives in this community. His thought his childhood was delightful. However, at age 12, he knows he will be assigned a job. He is apprehensive about the prospect. What does he really want to do? He is not sure. Everyone in the community is assigned an occupation that suits his or her abilities. In a special ceremony, children who turn 12 years old in a given year are grouped together. He sits in the auditorium and watches and listens as all the other children in his age group are assigned jobs. Jonas is the only one left without an assignment. Is something wrong? At the end of the ceremony, he is finally called up and told he is to be a "Receiver". This is the highest honor. He is to be trained by the Giver. The Giver is the only one in the society that has any sense of history; he is the depository of memories. The others live only in the present. The Giver is to transfer his memories of the human race to Jonas, for the Giver is old and tired and needs to be replaced. This society is one of conformity. "Sameness" is fostered and rewarded. All the houses are identical. Haircuts, dress and activities are strictly regimented. Everyone sees grayness; no one even sees colors. Only the separate job assignments differentiate the members. They are told how to act; they are told how to live. Everyone takes a pill to keep all passion at bay. Only superficial discussions of one's feelings are allowed; only certain feelings are appropriate. The people know vaguely about "Elsewhere", the outside world, but they stay in the Community and do as they are told. When Jonas starts receiving memories from the Giver, he experiences pain and suffering but also love and freedom of choice. He also begins to see the world in color. He is told he can lie about his training and not tell anyone what he is experiencing. Jonas is careful of what he says at home now. When he is asked if he dreams, he says "no", because his dreams would not be acceptable. He does not tell them that he has stopped taking the pill to suppress passion. His feelings and emotions grow, and he tries to hide these from his family and the others in the Community. The Giver is the only person who knows what he is going through. Jonas thinks the other people in the Community tell the truth about their jobs. Then one day, the Giver allows him to watch a video recording of his father at work with his job taking care of infants. Jonas had always thought his Dad liked the infants that were in his care. This view was reinforced since his father brought home an infant named Gabriel who needed some extra care. Gabriel was not learning to sleep through the night; he was different than the other infants in the ward. If he did not learn to sleep through the night he would be RELEASED. Jonas soothes the boy to sleep by acting as Giver and sending the child peaceful thoughts. The child does not sleep when he is in the new infant ward, however. Jonas

learns that Gabriel is to be RELEASED. In the infant ward, twins have been born. Twins are not allowed in the Community. Only one of the twins can be kept. The other is to be RELEASED. Jonas watches as his father weighs each of the twins and sets aside the smaller of the two. Then his father calmly injects the smaller twin in the head with a lethal chemical. The boy dies. Jonas is devastated. He had always looked up to his father. Jonas now knows what RELEASED means. He had thought that those who were RELEASED, including the disabled and the elderly went to a heavenly place in another community. Jonas now knows that RELEASED means death. Shocked and scared, Jonas knows that his father has been lying to everyone about what he does. Is everyone lying about his or her work? Jonas is disillusioned and decides to leave the Community, something that is forbidden. He realizes that the Community is a horrible place; it is a dystopia, not a Utopia. Jonas hoards some leftover food (all leftover food must be put out in front of each house) and prepares for the right opportunity. The Giver helps him escape. He escapes with Gabriel and is pursued by helicopters. Freezing and nearly starving, they reach a hill and look down upon a lit up house below. A family is sitting cozily in a living room with a lovely Christmas tree. The scene is a memory that Jonas had received from the Giver. Is this real or is it just a memory? Are Jonas and Gabriel safe in "Elsewhere" or are they dead? What information is kept from us in today's world? It is easy to see distortions of truth in our media. Misinformation is spread rapidly through the Internet as well as television, and, probably, our newspapers. We see many different cultures in the world, and they all have their version of reality. Medical doctors often give tranquilizers and antidepressants to dull patients' emotions. There is some parallel here to the pill that every 12 year-old child in the Community must start to take daily to get rid of passionate feelings. Does not great art and music need passion and intense feelings to be inspired?"

A1 DAY1, "Nostalgia. Read this in middle school (I'm 20) had the strong urge to reread this gem. The second I got the package I cracked the spine open and fell in deep. I forgot how strong the words on the pages hit. I feel just like a little girl again lost in the pages. Definitely a good read would recommend to everyone."

j.c., "Masterpiece. This book is amazing and deserves the Newberry award. I always loved how Lowry gives enough description that you can imagine every scene in your head. I also love how she was able to give each character something so that it was not just about Jonas and the Giver, but all of the characters. I really like how Lowry created a world where everything is the same and there is no color, it gives insight to the saying "I do not see color" when referring to race. It shows the world if they literally cannot see color, feel pain, or even make decisions of who they are. The people in the Community do not get to choose their child's name, or what they do in their lives for an occupation. If they do something against the rules, then they would get a consequence. It really shows what a world would look like in perfect harmony and equality. It also shows what we lose from gaining equality. An example of how the community has rules to make

sure everything is perfect, is the use of specific language. They cannot use the word "starving" for example, as shown in the book when Jonas got chastised, because they are not actually starving, they told him that he had to say hungry. Another example is on page 159-160 when the mom said "Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete" that was over the word "love" the society has been so equalized that the word love has lost its meaning in each of the family units. Overall, my favorite book 10/10 would read again!!"

Ice, "Imaginative. I came to this book because I read it has been banned, somewhere. A good reason to read it! A wonderful concept: a book from a child's perspective about growing up, maturing; breaking out of 'sameness' to see beauty when one 'separates' into individuality...or a child's version of '1984', but without the harshness."

Katie Stallsworth, "The Giver. This book, The Giver, Jonas is given the task as receiver to feel emotions and memories of the past. The Giver is trying to help him see what the world was like before the sameness happened. The more he receives from the giver, the more questions and concerns Jonas develops. The Giver is a dystopian world that is full of the same and dull individuals. It has some qualitative and quantitative methods of helping the reader figure out the message or bigger meaning hidden within the text and being a good amount of length to get the message across. The bigger meaning being that no one is the same and shouldn't be. Also, memory is important and shouldn't be suppressed. Memory is history and history can repeat itself if we don't pass that information onto the next generations. Which can help the reader take in consideration of what we thought we knew and what we know now. It also allows the readers to know that it's okay to ask questions and be curious, but most important to be yourself. Some people might think it's too mature for young readers due to the pain, emotions, and hidden means including some sexual references, but it's a good story and teaches young readers to be themselves and be interested in the history of our world. This book won the John Newberry Medal. After reading it, I can see why it won. The Giver is a great read and good for educational purposes in school!"

Nez , "Fabulous Journey!. I bought this book for my son but I was so intrigued by it that I decided to read it myself. It's a cracking little book that kept me glued to the pages and I couldn't put it down until I had read it from cover to cover! To be honest, this didn't take long as it's a fairly short book and the language is reasonably simple. I think it's probably aimed at pre-teens or early teens. The main protagonist, Jonas, is coming to the age where he becomes an adult within the 'community' that he and his family and friends live in. However, things are not as they seem and the direction of the book takes a deep, dark turn and Jonas starts to see things in a different light....I won't say much more than that as I don't want to spoil it but let the above intrigue you enough to buy and read this book! It's an easy read and the story sticks with you."

J. Ang, "Remembering the Future. Although this novel was published about 25 years ago, it has an immediacy that makes it timeless. Primarily targeted as a children's book, it manages to captivate both young and old readers with its identifiable dystopian themes. An ordinary boy, Jonas, in an ordinary nuclear family unit, soon finds out what he had taken for normalcy and safety stems from a much more sinister design. There is something disconcerting about the Sameness that defines the entire community, with strictly regulated progress at every age as a child, each year marked by a formal ceremony, right from the time he was "born", or rather assigned to a family, to the time he turns twelve. The community regulates its population with systematic "Release" of their elderly and genetically weak "Newchildren" to "Elsewhere". What's probably most eerie is the lack of deep emotions, the tightly-reined speech and language, and appropriate behaviour expected of everyone in fulfilling their roles apparently cheerfully and without contest or discontentment. Jonas begins to question this reality and sets himself apart when he is assigned a specific role to play that would tear his whole world apart. It is to Lowry's credit that she creates this preternaturally-perfect little community in a simple manner, which would not be difficult for a child to imagine and process, and yet arouse uneasy feelings that forces the reader to confront established values and ways of living that he may have taken for granted without question. As a speculative novel, it is highly disturbing for the way it is entirely believable as a possible future."

JenniferT, "A wonderfully well written short novel. An absolutely outstanding short read. This has been in my TBR pile for 6 months and in a way I'm gutted I left it so long to read. What a phenomenally well written short story from the perspective of a 12 year old boy living in a society where they value sameness and rules. Despite being written from a child's perspective there is nothing childish about this writing style. It is informed, engaging, it is exceptionally good at the slow reveal and completely heartbreaking at the same time. Really makes you think, particularly in relation to totalitarian regimes"

Zulu Warrior, "The Giver. Jonas 11yrs lived with his parents and his sister Lily, his father was a Nurturer of small children, mother worked at the Dept of Justice, father brought one baby home, Gabriel, he was a little behind the other children and needed some family life, Lily wanted to keep him but only one boy and girl were allowed, the society they lived in had no memories, everything was one colour, children at 12yrs are told what employment they would do, Jonas was shocked to find he had been given the most important one, he was apprenticed to the Receiver who was responsible for all memories of the society. He could discuss nothing of what he learnt or the memories he was given, he was given good memories of snow and sunshine but also given memories of pain and torture, each time he received a memory the Receiver lost it to Jonas, father was trying to decide which of twin boys were to be nurtured and which was to be released, Jonas had heard this word before when old people are released, he asks the Receiver who tells him, Jonas is totally shocked"

Adam Frankenberg, "Coming of age in a dystopian world. Step by step Lois Lowry draws you into Jonas' world that of his family who live somewhere in the world, simply referred to as the community, sometime in the (distant?) future. Jonas is approaching the ceremony of the twelves where children start to become adults and the role in the community is chosen. As we learn more and more about the society in which Jonas lives it becomes increasingly dark and troubling more and more of a dystopia rather than a utopia. As this is a book for young adults the language is simple and the book itself is relatively short. This does not mean that the book itself is either simply of lightweight. It asks profound questions about our own society and indeed all societies. I would highly recommend it to any Young adult, maybe over the age of thirteen as some of the ideas raised I would also say that any adult reader would probably find lots in it to make them think. And it is certainly an engaging read. I found Jonas' voice utterly realistic though out that the subtle way in which he starts to see the world differently is beautifully conveyed."

The book by Lois Lowry has a rating of 5 out of 4.7. 27,219 people have provided feedback.

Book Information

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