

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Giver

by

Lois Lowry

Book Information

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While training to be the Receiver of Memory, Jonas experiences joy and sadness for the first time. He becomes convinced his society has given up too much, and he can no longer accept the sameness.
Book #1

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Main Characters

Asher Jonas's best friend
Father and Mother Jonas's parents
Fiona Jonas's friend
Jonas the twelve-year-old boy who becomes The Receiver of Memories
Lily Jonas's sister
The Giver the former Receiver, who transmits memories to Jonas

Vocabulary

apprehensive mentally upset over possible misfortune or danger; in fear or dread of possible evil or harm; anxious or worried; quick to understand

chastisement the act of inflicting pain as punishment; a scolding or verbal punishment; a severe criticism or correction for improper behavior; a rebuke for making a mistake

designated having been set apart for a purpose or duty or chosen officially to do a particular job; having been assigned a name or given a title; specified or indicated

disposition a general attitude; a temperament

excruciating tending to inflict or cause keen or intense pain or suffering, mental or physical; painful to the point of being impossible or nearly impossible to bear; tending to torture or torment

exempted excused; not made part of; released from usual duty

fleeting lasting only for a brief moment; passing or tending to pass quickly; not permanent

glee extreme or great happiness or merriment; good humor; a feeling of great amusement or pleasure; joy; delight

meticulously in a manner that shows extreme care for and attention to details, almost to a fault; with much concern about exactness and precision; very carefully

perceived became aware or conscious of; understood; realized; sensed; saw; felt; observed

relinquished gave up; withdrew from; left behind; abandoned; let go; surrendered; released; quit

ritual a traditional or established ceremony; a custom that does not vary in its practice; a rite; a customary practice or observance

serene calm; placid or tranquil; undisturbed or unruffled

soundly in a right, correct, or proper way; in a good or healthy manner; in a way that shows good judgment; wisely; well; deeply; completely; thoroughly

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successor someone who follows or replaces another in a position; one who succeeds another in a job, position, or situation

Synopsis

Jonas, age twelve, lives in a futuristic society in which everything from climate to family units to occupations is strictly controlled. At age twelve, each child is assigned an occupation at a community-wide meeting.

Jonas receives the assignment of Receiver of Memory, an honored position held by one person in the society. He begins training with the current Receiver, who becomes The Giver. The Giver transmits to Jonas the memories of human history. The Receiver is the only person in the society with memories because they are considered burdensome and painful.

For the first time, Jonas experiences the exhilaration of sledding, the warmth of sunshine, and the feeling of real love in a family. He also, however, receives memories of pain, such as the agony of a broken leg and the horrors of warfare. During these experiences, he perceives color for the first time since citizens in his society see in black and white.

Despite the intense suffering he experiences along with some of the memories, Jonas becomes convinced his society has given up too much--seeing in color, strong feelings, free choice--to create their safe existence.

As Receiver-in-training, Jonas may ask for anything. At the Giver's urging, he asks to see a "release." Jonas has believed that a person who is released happily goes Elsewhere. He observes his father "releasing," or killing, the smaller of a pair of twins. He understands that this terrible fate awaits anyone who is old, imperfect, or rebellious.

Jonas and the Giver make a plan. If Jonas runs away from the community, the memories he currently holds will return to the people. Although they will suffer, their feelings and, hopefully, wisdom will return. The Giver will help them deal with these

feelings.

Jonas's family unit has been caring for a young boy named Gabriel, who has been slow to develop. Father announces that Gabriel is to be released the following morning. During the night, Jonas flees with Gabriel. Gradually, the memories leave Jonas, presumably to return to the community. After experiencing great hunger and cold, Jonas and Gabriel come upon the scene from one of the memories the Giver passed to Jonas. He and Gabriel then ride a sled toward a house from which colored lights twinkle and which Jonas knows is filled with love.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Inferential Comprehension

What was the difference between the feelings Jonas felt after becoming The Receiver and the feelings others in the community discussed each evening in their family units?

The feelings Jonas had were much deeper. He felt grief instead of just sadness and injustice and cruelty instead of just impatience and exasperation. Jonas recognized that the deeper feelings he felt could not be calmly discussed at the evening meal.

Constructing Meaning

What would be the pros and cons of living in a society like Jonas's, where people have very little choice and do not experience strong feelings? Would you want to live in Jonas's society if you could?

Some of the pros are that it would be easy and pain-free and you wouldn't have to accept responsibility. The cons include little individuality, no freedom, shallow feelings, and no joy.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Recognizing Setting

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Understanding Literary Features Understanding
Literary Features

Comparing and Contrasting Compare &
Contrast

Making Predictions Making Predictions