

The Giver

Lois Lowry

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Many parts of our world today are full of bigotry, racism, murder, abuse, and other unfathomable atrocities that make us question whether the humanist feelings we pride ourselves on still even exist. Many have asked themselves about what they, or anyone for that matter, can do to reverse the rising number of misdemeanors in modern society. We all require, not as privileges, but as the unalienable rights the freedom to do what we believe, the freedom to say what we want to speak, and to be able to preach and pray whatever we like. Yet with these unbinding freedoms, many of us humans have amounted to nothing that helps to prove the rights that we demand are in fact beneficial to our society. We may speak everything we wish yet often the majority of the words that come out of our mouths are slanderous and scornful. We pray the religion that we desire with no public reprimand; yet many gather in unison to disdain particular religions for wishing to build their temple, on a site on which we wish they do not do so. So how, in any way, are the incongruities we have set helping our society, or is the same system we take for granted in fact detrimental to humanity? The book, *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry has focused on this same premise of incongruity against congruity. I personally, in accordance with the majority of the community in the book, agree that Sameness, the name given to the equivalency of the society, is helpful and beneficial in every area of life it be applied.

Jonas, the protagonist, lives in a society that remains peaceful by having a council assign and monitor all aspects of the citizens' lives. The society does not endorse the ideas of family and love, children are born to designated "Birthmothers" and family "units" apply for a maximum two children. After family units raise the children to adulthood, the parents proceeding to a housing facility for childless adults and the children become involved in their assigned jobs. The community suppresses emotions using pills, mainly focusing on citizens' libido, which they refer to as "Stirrings". The Community is run by the Committee of Elders whom assign each 12-year-old a selected job based on interests and aptitudes which he or she will perform for the rest of his or her productive working life. When a member of the community has committed crimes three times he or she may be punished by "release". Jonas, a Twelve, lives in a standard family unit with his mother (a judge) and his father (a "Nurturer") and his Seven sister, Lily. On the day of the Ceremony of Twelve, each Eleven is called by their number, which corresponds to the order in which they were born, and is given their permanent job. The Chief Elder skips Jonas' number and proceeds. After anyone is assigned, Jonas is called on stage and learns that he has been selected to be the next Receiver of Memories because of his unusual ability to see beyond, or the ability to see color which the other people in the community cannot.

He is set aside to receive training through an old man named the Giver (the last Receiver of Memory). Jonas telepathically receives memories of things eliminated from his world: violence, sadness, and loss, as well as true love, beauty, joy, adventure, animals, and family. Jonas is alienated from his friends and family when he realizes how sheltered his community's life has been. Jonas wishes to change the community, return the emotion and meaning to the other wise bland world he lives in. The Giver and he plan on having Jonas leave the community, causing all of his memories to be released, allowing the community to feel the emotions that Jonas and the Giver feel. Jonas asks the Giver if he ever thinks about his own release, leading him to watch the release of a child of a set of twin boys born that morning. Jonas watches in

horror as his father talks sweetly to the baby before giving the newborn a lethal injection and then dumping the body down a garbage chute. The Giver says that the previous Receiver of Memory had applied for release and had preferred to inject herself. The Giver informs him of his child, Rosemary, who was the previous Receiver of Memory. Jonas's family had temporarily raised a baby named Gabriel during the course of the book as he was unable to sleep through the night. Jonas learns that Gabe can receive memories that he uses to help calm him. Gabriel will be released and, desperate, Jonas flees the community with Gabe. At first, the escape seems successful, with all the search planes finally giving up their search for Jonas. Cold and hungry, Jonas and Gabe begin to lose hope but, remembering the memory of sunshine, use it and regain strength. Jonas and Gabriel cross a snow-covered hill in the dark and find a sled on top, which Jonas remembers from the first memory he ever received. He and Gabriel board the sled and go down the hill where they seem to hear music coming from some houses with Jonas experiencing symptoms of hypothermia, leaving his and Gabriel's future unresolved.

Sameness as an overall aspect of their life is an extremely beneficial trait that has been proven in the community with its lack of domestic violence, poverty, or trouble of any sort. The facet of Sameness has helped the community to abolish whatever possible types of problems that they have, or that they could have. Feelings and emotions have been exchanged for medicine and nourishment. Color and landscapes have been altered for safety and nullification of bigotry and racism. Lois Lowry focuses her book on whether Jonas's community is either a utopia or dystopia, with the final decision being left to the reader with a meticulously created ambiguity in its writing. A utopia, as the community has no racism, no bigotry, poverty, impoverishment, or abuse. Or a dystopia, considering that in exchange for medicine and food for all, a few of Mother Nature's more destructive creations has been extirpated. You choose. *The Giver* is an easily enjoyable book, quick and thought provoking. Stark contrasts with the world we currently live in make it brash, bold, and as brazenly blunt with its moral as heart warming.

Recommended Titles:

Gathering Blue: Lois Lowry

Nineteen Eighty Four: George Orwell

Messenger: Lois Lowry