

Book Review: *The Giver*

The Giver by Lois Lowry is about a boy named Jonas who lives in a controlled environment along with his assigned family. People in this contained community are lacking in individual experiences and emotions. The leaders in the community control the reproduction of children, adult occupations, removal from family members and occupations, and when all people are released from society. The citizens are cordial and courteous because they are taught how to behave, communicate, and conform to the idea of sameness. Citizens are not allowed to maintain memories such as pain and grief caused by injuries, violence, or war. Citizens are not allowed to experience emotions such as love. Each year, the citizens assemble to advance children through annual stages of life. At the Ceremony of Twelve, the Committee of Elders assign the children planned occupations based on observations, ability levels, and interests. Jonas is assigned the occupation of Receiver of Memory which is an honored position as the single person who retains all memories through time for the entire community. During daily training sessions, the Giver transfers memories to Jonas by placing his hands on Jonas's back. In the beginning, the Giver transmits pleasurable memories to Jonas. When Jonas receives painful, negative memories, he begins to question if he is courageous enough to endure the responsibility bestowed upon him.

In evenings after his daily sessions, Jonas helps his father, a Nurturer, take care of a baby named Gabriel. Jonas is caring and compassionate towards the child, and he tries to explore the idea of family relationships, but his family members are too programmed by the laws of the community to engage. It was decided by the Committee of Elders that Gabriel was not meeting expectations and would have to be released. A turning point in the novel was the moment when Jonas uncovered the truth about the meaning of being released from society after he receives a transmission of a memory. With the help of the Giver, Jonas makes a righteous movement to risk his own life and save the child from being released, and to save the community from sameness.

The two main issues addressed in the novel were the ideas of "sameness" in the community and being "released" from society. Because the citizens have the same provisions and the same course of action in life, there is no knowledge of individuality. Being released from society is viewed as part of the process, and the individuals do not grieve or express any sadness or sympathy. The novel helps students to determine moral character values including: respect, integrity, honesty, loyalty, self-knowledge, and empathy. Jonas demonstrated the morality of mind virtues including patience, courage, perseverance, will, and endurance in the novel many times, especially when he continued to receive the memories despite the sadness, horror, and pain he had to withstand. Additionally, Jonas exemplified courage along with the other virtues when he attempted to save Gabriel at the risk of costing his own life. Through the entire novel, Jonas displayed morality of deed through his humility in actions, his loyalty to his duty, his respect for human life, his trust in the Giver, and quest for righteousness. In the classroom, students can engage in individual and/or group reading, student centered discussions as a result of plot elements, and they have many options to extend learning through writing assignments.

Works Cited

Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.