

CHAPTERS 1-3: The Ceremony of Twelve

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 1, Paragraph 1

This passage, the opening paragraph of *The Giver*, introduces Jonas, the main character. It is nearly December, and Jonas is trying to identify an uneasy feeling. At first he calls it fear, but he rejects that word. Fear is queasier. He remembers feeling fear a year earlier when something unexplained happened—a strange jet airplane flew over Jonas’s community, fast enough to break the sound barrier, first one way and then the other.

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Discussion Prompt: Reread the first page of *The Giver*. In the first paragraph, the reader is introduced to Jonas as he corrects himself in describing his own emotions and recalls a terrifying day one year earlier. Why do you think Lois Lowry opens the novel with Jonas’s memory of a mysterious flying aircraft? Why does she choose to present Jonas in this way?

VOCABULARY

distraught**dis•traught** *adjective*

Very upset; deeply distressed

*The little boy was so distraught when his balloon popped that I gave him mine.***nurturer****nur•tur•er** *noun*

Someone who takes care of, and helps in the development of, another

*Under the daily care of her nurturer, the injured hawk healed quickly.***hoarded****hoard•ed** *verb*

Stored or collected, usually in larger amounts than presently needed

*In advance of the hurricane, people hoarded basic supplies like milk, cereal, and flashlight batteries.***palpable****pal•pa•ble** *adjective*

Clear or obvious

*By the time Mr. Jameson began to pass out the math tests, the students’ anxiety was palpable.***aptitude****ap•ti•tude** *noun*

Inherent or acquired ability

Although Jane’s athletic aptitude was not immediately apparent, she was voted “Most Valuable Player” at the end of the season.

CLOSE READ

1. What can you infer about the pilot that Jonas remembers in Chapter 1, and about the meaning of being released?

2. Throughout *The Giver*, author Lois Lowry renames many everyday terms. Eleven-year-olds are “elevens,” babies are “newchildren,” stuffed animals are “comfort objects,” and families are called “family units.” What is the purpose of these alternate labels? What effect do they have on the story?

3. What is the feelings ritual? What purpose does it serve?

4. What happens when Asher and Jonas are tossing an apple on the playground?

CHAPTERS 4-5: The March Towards Adulthood

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 4, Paragraph 22

In this passage Jonas is volunteering at the House of the Old. He is bathing an elderly woman named Larissa. As he gently soaps her while she lies relaxed, he is reminded of the baby named Gabriel being soaped by his father at home. It's both the contented smile and being naked that they share. Only babies and the Old are exceptions to the community's rule against seeing anyone naked. The rule doesn't make sense to Jonas. He sees in Larissa's expression only calm, trust, and freedom.

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Discussion Prompt: Jonas questions the rule about apologizing for accidentally seeing someone naked. Later, he and Larissa consider proposing to the Elders that children be permitted to watch the Releasing Ceremonies. Are there new rules for their community that you would propose? Which rules would you retire? Examine the benefits and drawbacks of each rule. How does the “no bragging” rule benefit citizens, for instance, and how does it hurt them? Explain.

VOCABULARY

designate**des·ig·nate** *verb*

To appoint someone to a position

*Samantha designated Ruth as team captain.***chastise****chas·tise** *verb*

To criticize severely

*The teacher chastised her students for their laziness.***leisurely****lei·sure·ly** *adjective*

relaxed, unhurried

*With nothing on our schedule, we took a leisurely stroll into town.***grasp****grasp** *verb*

To understand

I don't grasp your meaning when you talk so fast.

CLOSE READ

1. What rule does not apply in the case of newchildren and the Old, and how do those groups benefit from the exception?

2. How does Larissa describe Roberto's releasing ceremony?

3. In Chapter 5, what dream does Jonas share with his family during the morning dream-telling ritual, and what is their reaction?

4. Why does Jonas refrain from praising Benjamin's accomplishments, despite his admiration?

CHAPTERS 6-9: Jonas Receives his Assignment

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 9, Paragraphs 1–2

This passage, at the beginning of Chapter 9, follows Jonas out of the Auditorium after The Ceremony of Twelve. He feels conspicuously different from everyone else now, an unfamiliar and weird feeling. Just as the Chief Elder had described, he is already feeling his apartness. It's a lonely feeling, this new special status, as he tries to locate his family and his friend Asher.

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Discussion Prompt: What can you infer about Jonas and the job of Receiver from his qualifications—Intelligence, Wisdom, Integrity, Courage, and especially the Capacity to See Beyond? What can you infer about the nature of the community from the way people react to Jonas after his selection?

VOCABULARY

inadequate**in•ad•e•quate** *adjective*

Defective or imperfect

*I thought I'd sold enough raffle tickets, but my boss found my total inadequate.***somber****som•ber** *adjective*

Gloomy or depressing

*Elise's grandfather's funeral was a somber day for everyone in attendance.***exuberant****ex•u•ber•ant** *adjective*

Extremely joyful; very enthusiastic

*I didn't much care about the outcome of this round of Monopoly, but my brother was exuberant about his win.***scrupulous****scru•pu•lous** *adjective*

Minutely careful; precise or exact

Mark received an A+ on his report because of his scrupulous attention to detail.

CLOSE READ

1. Why do the members of the community react to Jonas as they do following the Naming Ceremony?

2. Asher is Jonas’s best friend, but they seem to have little in common. How do the two boys differ?

3. Why isn’t baby Gabriel present at the naming ceremony?

4. In the Chief Elder’s speech to the new twelves at the Ceremony of Twelve, she says, “Today, we honor your differences.” Is this surprising? Why or why not?

5. Which rule in Jonas’s packet terrifies him, and why?

CHAPTERS 10-13: First Lessons

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 10, Paragraphs 53–54

In this passage, near the end of Chapter 10, Jonas is meeting the Giver for the first time. The Giver has been trying to explain that he will be imparting all his memories to Jonas. Jonas politely suggests his time might be spent more usefully than listening to the old man's recollections of his past. The Giver tries again, saying that it's not his own memories he will share, but the memories of the entire world, going back many generations. Jonas is completely confused by the notion of a wider world and time going back generations.

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Discussion Prompt: Why do you think the Elders of Jonas's community set up this system of passing on memories between two people only and not sharing them with the community as a whole? Why preserve the past at all? Do you think they made the right choice of Receiver in Jonas? Why or why not?

VOCABULARY

conspicuous**con•spic•u•ous** *adjective*

Attracting attention because of a striking quality or feature

Wearing yellow pants and a lime-green shirt was a strange choice for someone trying not to look conspicuous.

prohibition**pro•hi•bi•tion** *noun*

A law or rule that forbids certain behaviors

The prohibition of sweets at Denise's house didn't bother her; she preferred pretzels anyway.

successor**suc•ces•sor** *noun*

A person who succeeds another in a position or office

Because of my respect for the previous club president, I was delighted when I was nominated as her successor.

quizzically**quiz•zi•cal•ly** *adverb*

In a questioning or puzzled manner

When I tossed my dog the ball, he did not run after it but instead looked at me quizzically.

CLOSE READ

1. To what does the Giver compare the feeling of holding the memories of the world, and why?

2. What memories of natural wonders does Jonas learn the Community has given up in favor of "Sameness"?

3. What does the Giver say happened to the experience of snow?

4. What destination does Jonas sense in a dream influenced by the Giver, and why does he remember it?

CHAPTERS 14-15: Sharing Memories

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 14, Paragraphs 46–48

This passage is the heart of a conversation between Jonas and the Giver about the system of transferring memories that they are both part of. Jonas is still feeling the pain of a memory of hunger, and he and the Giver have been discussing why such painful memories are necessary. The Giver has explained that it is necessary to know about bad things in order to give advice to avoid those things. Jonas responds that it would be much fairer if the pain were shared among everyone in the community, and not just by two.

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Discussion Prompt: Why does Jonas's community choose a single Receiver to hold all the memories instead of sharing them? Should a society have a right to withhold painful sensations or experiences from its citizens? Argue why it should or shouldn't. Use examples from the text in your discussion.

VOCABULARY

agony**a•go•ny** *noun*

Intense physical or mental suffering

*The onslaught of another migraine headache left me in agony.***wry****wry** *adjective*

Expressing a combination of humor and regret; ironic

*Brady gave a wry smile when it turned out that neither he nor his main rival won the prize.***fretful****fret•ful** *adjective*

Feeling or expressing distress or irritation

*The puppy let out a fretful cry when the bigger dog stole his toy.***placid****pla•cid** *adjective*

Pleasantly calm or peaceful

We had a lovely dinner on the deck, gazing out over the placid lake.

CLOSE READ

1. The evening after Jonas experiences a sunburn for the first time, he feels “desperately lonely.” Why?

2. According to the Giver, what is the purpose of remembering pain? What example of that purpose does he give Jonas?

3. Both the Giver and Jonas, the Receiver, experience the urge to pass on memories to another. What kind of memories does each of them choose to give up, and what are their motives for doing so?

4. Why does Jonas choose not to tell the Giver that he transmitted a memory to baby Gabriel?

5. What is the significance of the phrase *back and back and back*?

CHAPTERS 16-17: Do You Love Me?

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 17, Paragraph 6

This passage shows Jonas reflecting on his broadened experience of the world beyond his community to which memories have given him access. Aware now of the various bodies of water in the world, he sees the community's river in a new way: as a direct link to the seas, lakes, and tributaries of the wider world.

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Discussion Prompt: Why does Jonas see “all the light and color and history” in the river? What might the river represent? Why is the fact that it starts and ends in Elsewhere significant? How does his understanding of the river now differ from other characters' attitudes towards it? Use examples from the text in your discussion.

VOCABULARY

obsolete**ob•so•lete** *adjective***Outdated; no longer in use**

Although “far out” is an obsolete expression, my dad still uses it all the time.

blurt**blurt** *verb***To utter suddenly or inadvertently**

I had to blurt out the name of the person who broke the terrarium so that my best friend wouldn't be punished.

ecstatic**ec•sta•tic** *adjective***Experiencing a state of sudden, intense, overpowering emotion**

The touchdown whipped the crowd into an ecstatic frenzy.

precise**pre•cise** *adjective***Exactness and accuracy of expression or detail**

The woman gave me precise directions to the coffee shop, and I found it easily.

CLOSE READ

1. In Chapter 16, why does Jonas stop taking his Stirrings-repression pills?

2. Why is Jonas so adamant that Lily is not angry over the playground infraction, just impatient and exasperated?

3. Why does Jonas tell Asher not to play “Good Guys and Bad Guys” anymore?

4. How do Jonas’s parents respond when he asks them if they love him?

CHAPTERS 18-19: Release

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 19, Paragraphs 48–49

In this climactic passage, Jonas has just watched his father lethally inject the newchild twin who was underweight and therefore scheduled to be “released.” Jonas connects what he has seen with the memory of a soldier dying of his wounds in battle, a memory that came back recently watching his friends playing “war.” He recognizes with horror that his father has just killed the newchild—and now he knows what releasing means.

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Discussion Prompt: Watching his father release the baby evokes a range of emotions in Jonas, and he understands a lot more about how the people around him operate. What does he understand, and what are your feelings? Is Jonas’s father guilty of murder? How would the community justify releasing babies or the elderly? What is the Giver’s point of view?

VOCABULARY

rueful**rue•ful** *adjective*

Mournful or regretful

With a rueful expression, he apologized for hurting my feelings.

anguish**an•guish** *noun*

Extreme suffering, grief, or pain

The children wept in anguish at the thought of their lost cat out in the rain, until they heard a faint meow.

inflict**in•flict** *verb*

To cause to suffer

Those bumblebees are cute, but they can inflict painful stings.

devastated**de•va•sta•ted** *adjective*

Overwhelmed, as with grief or shock

I was devastated by her criticism of my hair, though I tried to keep my cool.

CLOSE READ

1. Why does Jonas think about his experience on the playing field after watching his father release the baby?

2. What happened to the last Receiver?

3. If Jonas were lost or Released, what would happen?

4. Lois Lowry at times leaves important, seemingly familiar events unidentified. Why does she make this choice with the Giver's memories of Christmas (or another winter holiday) and war?

5. What is Jonas's father's attitude as he performs the Release?

CHAPTERS 20-22: Escape

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 20, Paragraphs 33–36

In this passage, Jonas and the Giver are discussing the need for change in the community. The Giver has pointed out that people once felt emotions and could again. Now he says that only by sharing painful memories can people counter the worst part of possessing them—namely, being alone with them. But because of his year with Jonas, the Giver now believes that change is not just necessary, but possible, and he has an idea of how to achieve it.

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Discussion Prompt: Discuss the importance of sharing memories in a culture. What has been lost in Jonas’s community by having only two individuals—the Giver and Receiver—share the wealth of sensations and experiences, both pleasurable and painful? Why do you think the Elders chose to keep the community unaware of those things? Compare the sharing of lore and ideas in different global societies with the system in Jonas’s community.

VOCABULARY

meticulously**me•tic•u•lous•ly** *adverb*

Taking or showing extreme care about minute details.

*Inga meticulously stitched together the torn trousers.***soothingly****sooth•ing•ly** *adverb*

Having a calming or relieving effect

*She spoke to the baby soothingly, hoping to calm him down.***transgression****trans•gres•sion** *noun*

A violation of a law or a command

*Breaking your curfew was a major transgression.***exquisite****ex•quis•ite** *adjective*

Finely beautiful; marvelous

Falling in love was an exquisite sensation that they hoped would last forever.

CLOSE READ

1. The Giver tells Jonas that he’s been “a little selfish,” that he has not shared a particular memory with Jonas. What is it?

2. How does the Giver plan to explain Jonas’s disappearance?

3. At the end of Chapter 20, Jonas learns that the Giver has a daughter. Who is she?

4. Why is Jonas forced to flee in the night, forgoing the meticulous plan he had formed with the Giver?

5. What rules does Jonas break during his midnight escape?

CHAPTERS 23: A Memory All His Own

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 23, Paragraphs 34–35

In this passage, the closing paragraphs of *The Giver*, Jonas is speeding downhill with Gabriel on the sled he has found. He knows that the two of them will find friendly helping people at the bottom of the hill. Ahead of him he can hear people singing. It must be, he realizes, that special memory that the Giver offered to give him: music. He's not sure—it might be an echo—but he thinks he can hear music behind him, as well, way back in the community.

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Discussion Prompt: Why do you think author Lois Lowry chose not to resolve the book clearly? Would the novel be better if it had a definitive ending? Why or why not? Finally, describe in your own words how you think *The Giver* ends, as indicated by these last two paragraphs.

VOCABULARY

surged**surged** *verb*

Moved forward or upward strongly

Determination surged within him as he zigged and zagged his way into the end zone.

consciousness**con•scious•ness** *noun*

The state of being awake and aware of one's surroundings

He fainted at the sight of his bloody bandages but quickly regained consciousness.

wisp**wisp** *noun*

A person or thing that is small, delicate, or barely noticeable

After two months of attempting to grow a mustache, all he had managed was a thin wisp of hair.

CLOSE READ

1. There are two scenes in which Jonas shares the same memory with Gabe. What are they, and what is their purpose?

2. According to Jonas, who is the last person left for him to love?

3. How does Jonas feel when he reaches the top of the hill?

4. How is the memory of the place beyond the hill different from all others?
