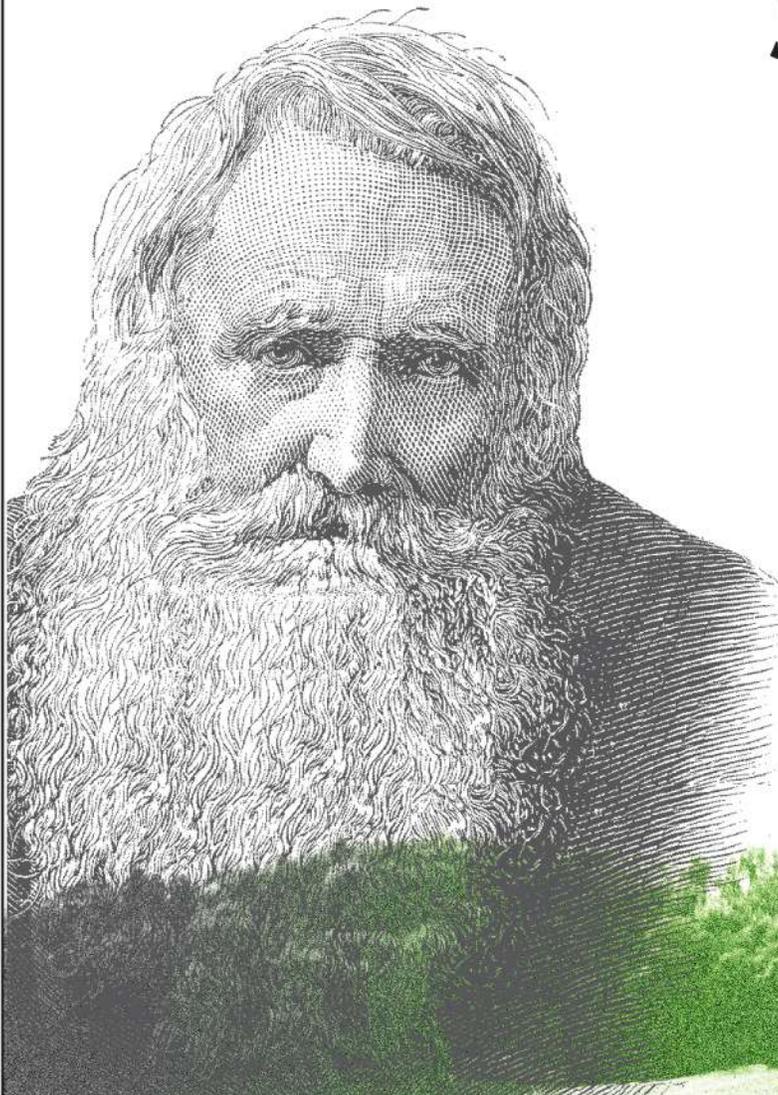


# *The Giver*

## *Study Guide*

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For the novel  
by Lois Lowry



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## Synopsis

Jonas's community is a perfect society. There is no pain or hunger, everyone is provided for, and there are no problems. A set of Rules governs everything from the formation of families, to standards for behavior, to the age at which a child receives his bicycle.

Jonas is an Eleven, and like all other members of his age group, he will soon take part in the Ceremony of Twelve, in which he is assigned to a particular job for the rest of his life in the community. But Jonas is nervous about the coming ceremony. He has no idea what his Assignment, chosen for him by the Committee of Elders, will be.

But Jonas is unique in the community, and in recognition of his uniqueness Jonas is chosen to be the next Receiver of Memory, the most important member of the Committee of Elders. The current Receiver of Memory is an elderly man who takes Jonas under his tutelage and begins to teach him about his new Assignment.

The Receiver of Memory is the only member of the community who can recall the past, before the community adopted "sameness" as a solution to its problems. During their times together, the elderly man becomes the Giver, passing on the memories and the knowledge Jonas will need in order to gain the wisdom necessary to lead the community.

Jonas discovers that the community has not only removed sadness and pain but has also removed joy and love. And soon Jonas discovers more secrets, including the terrible policies his community has adopted to keep everything running smoothly. Together, he and the Giver devise a plan by which the community will be forced to face the past it has forgotten—the joys and the sorrows—in order to achieve perfection.

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4. A male Eleven named Benjamin had done his entire nearly-Four years in the Rehabilitation Center, working with citizens who had been injured.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

5. . . . his mother told of a dream fragment, a disquieting scene where she had been chastised for a rule infraction she didn't understand.

**disquieting**

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

**infraction**

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

**Connotative Meaning:**

Words have both a *denotative* meaning and a *connotative* meaning. The *denotative* meaning of a word is the meaning that can be found in the dictionary. In the previous vocabulary exercise, you responded with the *denotative* meaning of the words.

The *connotative* meaning of a word is the implied or suggested meaning of the word. It describes the way a word makes you feel or the feelings you associate with the word.

Read the two sentences below paying close attention to the meaning *implied* by the underlined words:

The Petersens had a visitor over for dinner.

The Petersens had a guest over for dinner.

Both *visitor* and *guest* mean that the Petersens had an extra person at the table for dinner. But the word *visitor* suggests nothing about the person. The word *guest*

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implies someone who was specifically invited and welcomed into their home. *Guest* has a more positive connotation. *Visitor* is more neutral, simply describing the extra person without adding extra connotative meaning.

In *The Giver* the author carefully chooses the words she uses for describing things in the community. Look at the underlined wording in the pairs of sentences below. Place a check mark next to the sentence that you feel has a more positive connotation because of the word used.

1.  Jonas's family sat down to dinner.  
 Jonas's family unit sat down to dinner.
  
2.  Jonas returned to his dwelling after school hours.  
 Jonas returned to his home after school hours.
  
3.  None of the Twelves knew what his or her Assignment would be.  
 None of the Twelves knew what his or her career would be.
  
4.  George spent a quiet evening with his wife.  
 George spent a quiet evening with his spouse.
  
5.  The family unit welcomed their newchild.  
 The family unit welcomed their baby.

As you continue to read, pay attention to the words the author chooses when describing things in the community. The words she chooses to use (or chooses to *not* use) may help explain why the community works the way it does.

### **Questions:**

1. Jonas and Gabriel share what physical characteristic?

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**Thinking About the Story:**

7. *Foreshadowing* is a hint or clue the author gives about something that will happen later in a story. In Chapter 3, Jonas realizes that his eyes gave him a look “as if one were looking into the clear water of the river, down to the bottom, where things might lurk which hadn’t been discovered yet.” What might the author be foreshadowing with this passage?
  
8. At the House of the Old, Larissa tells Jonas about the release of a man named Roberto. What happens during the celebration of release for the Old? Was this a happy or sad occasion?
  
9. What do you think happens when they make the actual release? Where exactly do you think the Old go?
  
10. Jonas is troubled by a dream he has. What does he recognize as the strongest feeling in his dream?

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15. Is it important that a family be biologically related in order to function properly? Explain your answer. What helps to keep families functioning? Consider Ephesians 5:22–6:4.
16. A recurring theme in *The Giver* has been rules and adherence to rules. The community's attitude toward rules and obedience can be summed up by an observation Jonas makes early in Chapter 4: "Better to steer clear of an occasion governed by a rule which would be so easy to break."  
Read Deuteronomy 4:1, 2; Matthew 5:20, 48; Matthew 22:35–40; 1 Corinthians 10:23; and Galatians 3:1–3, 11. Do you agree with Jonas that it is better to entirely avoid situations in which there is even a risk of breaking rules? How do these verses affect your answer?

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14. Answers will vary, but again, God seems to indicate that this is sometimes true. God commanded numerous feast days and celebrations. Some of these were for memorials that could have been remembered by fasting. But pleasure and joy also remind us of the love and provision of God, the goodness and beauty of His creation.

15. The writer of Ecclesiastes concludes that laughter and pleasure are foolish and meaningless, but that it is good and proper for a man to enjoy his life. When God gives someone wealth and possessions and he is able to enjoy them and be happy in his work, that is a gift from God. The joy God gives him keeps him from reflecting on the troubles of life.

16. Although Paul asserts that everything is permissible, he says that whatever we do we should do for the glory of God. This should be our attitude.

### *Chapters 12–16*

#### *Vocabulary:*

1. cautionary advice or kind rebuke; 2. without reason or sound judgment; 3. the quality of having vitality or energy; 4. having many curves or winding; 5. incorporated or absorbed; 6. imparting strength or vitality; 7. menacing or threatening; 8. calmly or quietly; 9. waving or swinging vigorously

#### *Questions:*

1. Jonas has a dream about sledding down a hill, just like the memory given to him by the Giver. Again and again in the dream, the accumulated snow brings the sled to a stop. But Jonas is left with the feeling that there is a destination in the distance beyond where the sled comes to a stop. He feels that this place is good, welcoming, and significant, and that he needs to get there.

2. Jonas wants Asher and Lily to understand the things he has learned. He wants to help Asher see colors, and he wants Lily to understand that elephants once existed.

3. Sometimes the Giver is in pain and wants to be left alone.

4. The Giver transmits the memory of sledding again, but this time the sled flips over and Jonas experiences, along with bruises and scrapes, what it feels like to have a broken leg. The pain is more severe than anything Jonas has experienced, and he begs the Giver for some relief from the pain. But the Giver says no and looks away. (Recall that Jonas is not allowed medication for injuries connected to his training.)

5. The Giver recalled memories of hunger and starvation, and he advised the community to keep the rate of births to three for each Birthmother. He also recalled memories of times when people destroyed each other in haste and fear and had brought about their own destruction. Using this memory he advised against shooting down the airplane that strayed over the community. Answers will vary.

6. The Giver was not allowed to discuss his work with anyone except the Receiver-in-Training, so there was a whole part of his life he was not allowed to share with his family. And for the Giver, the work done *is* his life.

7. The Giver's favorite memory is the memory of a family Christmas celebration.

8. Jonas was surprised that the elderly people were in the home with the rest of the family. He expected them to be kept in the House of the Old. Elderly people never left the House of the Old.

9. The strongest feeling he has is one of love.

10. Jonas's parents are surprised to hear Jonas use imprecise language. Jonas's mother says, "[Y]ou used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete." She suggests that they "enjoy" him, and father adds that they "take pride" in his accomplishments, but the word "love," they say, is inappropriate.

#### *Thinking About the Story:*

11. Jonas has begun seeing the color red, and the Giver tells him he will soon begin to see other colors as well. This means that the entire community, save for a few people like himself and the Giver, are color-blind.

12. This might indicate that Gabriel, like Jonas, has the mysterious "Capacity to See Beyond," and might have been chosen to be the next Receiver had he been older and had Jonas not been chosen. Earlier in the story we read that Gabriel had pale eyes like Jonas's, perhaps suggesting that he was like Jonas in other ways. Jonas had earlier recalled a female Five who also had the same kind of eyes, so perhaps there are a few others who have the ability to receive memories, but they have never learned about it.

13. Jonas thinks that if given the freedom to choose, a person might make the wrong choices. Jonas finds this idea frightening. He concludes that it's better and safer to protect people from wrong choices. After he reaches this conclusion, he is left with a feeling of frustration he doesn't understand. Answers will vary. Jonas knows something isn't right about his conclusion, but he has known no other way of living.