



LOIS LOWRY

"If you are a writer you are also an observant person. All writers are. And when you observe something, your imagination begins to play. Suppose you see a child crying in an airport. No big deal. But if you are a writer, you start to think: what if that child is being kidnapped? Or: I wonder if that child is in pain; maybe he has appendicitis, and his parents don't know it. And then you get on your flight, and you never see the crying child again, but the ideas stay there, in your imagination...."

Lois Lowry was born March 20, 1937 in Hawaii to Robert and Katharine Hammersberg. Her father was an Army dentist and the family lived all over the world. She attended Brown University, but left after her sophomore year to get married and raise a family of four children. They settled in Maine, where she returned to college and received her degree from the University of Southern Maine. Lois Lowry fulfilled a childhood dream when she began writing in the mid-1970s. Now divorced, she lives in West Cambridge with her dog, Bandit, and spends weekends in her 19th century farmhouse in New Hampshire.

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The Giver

By Lois Lowry

About this Book

Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives.

Discussion Questions

1. In *The Giver*, each family has two parents, a son, and a daughter. The relationships are not biological but are developed through observation and a careful handling of personality. How are families defined in our society? Are families the foundations of a society, or are they continually open for new definitions?
2. In Jonas' community, every person and his or her experience are precisely the same. The climate is controlled, and competition has been eliminated in favor of a community in which everyone works only for the common good. What advantages might "Sameness" yield for contemporary communities? Is the loss of diversity worthwhile?
3. Underneath the placid calm of Jonas' society lies a very orderly and inexorable system of euthanasia, practiced on the very young who do not conform, the elderly, and those whose errors threaten the stability of the community. What are the disadvantages and benefits of a community that accepts such a vision of euthanasia?
4. Why is the relationship between Jonas and The Giver dangerous, and what does this danger suggest about the nature of love?
5. The ending of *The Giver* may be interpreted in two very different ways. Perhaps Jonas is remembering his Christmas memory—one of the most beautiful that The Giver transmitted to him—as he and Gabriel are freezing to death, falling into a dreamlike coma in the snow. Or perhaps Jonas does hear music and, with his special vision, is able to perceive the warm house where people are waiting to greet him. In her acceptance speech for the Newbery Medal, Lois Lowry mentioned both possibilities but would not choose one as correct. What evidence supports each interpretation?
6. There are groups in the United States today that actively seek to maintain an identity outside the mainstream culture: the Amish, the Mennonites, Native American tribes, and the Hasidic Jewish community. What benefits do these groups expect from defining themselves as "other?" What are the disadvantages? How does the mainstream culture put pressure on such groups?
7. Lois Lowry helps create an alternate world by having the community use words in a special way. Though that world stresses what it calls "precision of language," in fact it is built upon language that is not precise but deliberately clouds meaning. What is the danger of such misleading language?
8. Examine the ways in which Jonas's community uses euphemism to distance itself from the reality of "Release." How does our own society use euphemism to distance us from such realities as aging and death, bodily functions, and political activities? What are the benefits and disadvantages of such uses of language?

Resources referenced:

kidsreads.com, teenreads.com, bookrags.com, teachingbooks.com, multcolib.org, barnesandnoble.com,
And MPL Staff.